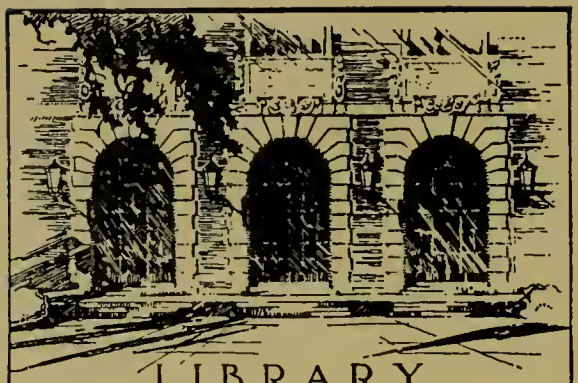

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MORLEY ASHTON.

MORLEY ASHTON:

A Story of the Sea.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "FAIRER THAN A FAIRY," ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOL. I.

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MORLEY ASHTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLIND GODDESS.

It was the evening of one of the last days of spring, when that delightful season is blending with the approaching summer, and when the sun was setting on one of those green and fertile landscapes which we find nowhere but in England, that a young man paused upon the crest of the eminence which overlooks, from the southward, the beautiful little vale and sequestered village of Acton-Rennel, and, with a kindling eye and flushing cheek, surveyed the scene and all its features, on which he had not gazed for what now seemed a long and weary lapse of time.

Morley Ashton—for it was he whom we introduce at once to the reader—was a handsome and active young fellow, with a lithe and well-knit figure,

somewhat above the middle height; but he was thin and rather sallow in face, as if wasted by recent sickness or suffering.

His short-shorn hair and well-pointed moustache, together with the general contour of his head, suggested the idea of a soldier, and yet no soldier was he.

Forethought and penetration were perceptible in the form and lines of his brow; his keen, bright, but contemplative eyes, and the shape of his lower jaw, betokened firmness, decision, and courage; and well did Morley Ashton require them all, for these pages, and the course of our story, which opens at no remote date, but only a very short time ago, will show that he had a very desperate game to play.

Tanned by warmer suns than those which shine in his native England, his complexion was dark, and, at times, there was a keen, bold restlessness in his eyes, which seemed to indicate that he had seen many a far and foreign shore, and many a danger too, since last he stood by the old Norman cross on Cherrywood Hill, and looked on the vale and village of Acton-Rennel.

In Morley's dress—a stout grey tweed suit—there was nothing remarkable; but a large and well-worn courier-bag, slung by a broad strap across his right shoulder, seemed to indicate that he was travelling, and dust covered his boots; yet he had only walked

some four miles or so from the nearest station on the London and North-Western line.

As he looked upon the landscape, where the cowslips were spotting the meadows; where the wild rose was blooming, and the yellow gorse was flowering by the hedgerows; where the cherry and apple trees were in full blossom by the wayside; the landscape, so rich in its foliage and greenery; so calm in aspect, with the square tower of its Norman church, stunted in form and massed with ivy, darkly defined against the flush of the western sky; the little parsonage, secluded among plum and apple trees, over which its clustered chimneys and quaint old gables peeped; the thatched village, buried amid coppice, wild hops, wild flowers, and ivy; the fertile uplands, where the wavy corn would soon be yellowing under the genial summer sun; and, stretching in the distance far away, the wooded chase, the remains of a great Saxon forest, whence comes the name of our village, *Æctune*, or Oaktown-Rennel, whose leafy dingles have echoed many a time to the horn of William Rufus, ere he fell by Tyrrel's arrow; the landscape, where the voice of the cuckoo rose at times from the woodlands, with the occasional lowing of the full-fed herd, winding homeward "slowly o'er the lea." As he gazed on all this, we say, a sigh of pleasure escaped from Morley Ashton, for it was long since he had beheld such a

scene, or one that had so much of England and of home in all its placid features.

Save a glimpse of the distant ocean, rippling and shining in the sunset, through a rocky opening or chasm, known as Acton Chine—terrible in the annals of wreckers and smugglers—the landscape might have seemed in the very heart of England; but on the ocean, "our water-girdle," Morley turned his back, for of late he had tasted quite enough of spray and spoondrift, having just landed in the Mersey, after a long and perilous voyage.

He passed the old church with its deep grey buttresses, and older yew trees; its picturesque *Lyke-gate,* footstile, and gravelled path, that wound between the grassy mounds and lettered stones; he passed the village, with its alehouse and well-remembered sign-board; and then he struck into the long green lane that lies beyond—the lane in which Dick Turpin robbed the rector.

All was very calm and still.

The merry voices of some little roisterers, who swung with frantic glee upon a paddock gate, soon died away in the distance; the wheel of the rustic mill had ceased to turn, and the water flowed unchafed along its narrow race; even the hum of the honey bee had died away, as it had gone laden to its home, and soft and almost holy thoughts would have stolen into Morley's heart, at such a time and

place and sober sunset, but for the keen anxiety that made him hasten on—the anxiety that love and long absence had created, and verses that he had somewhere read occurred to him with painful truth :—

"Ah ! not as once !—my spirit now
Is shadowed by a dull cold fear,
Nor Spring's soft breath that fans my brow
Nor Spring's sweet flowers my breast can cheer.

"Oh, Spring ! sweet Spring ! if Heaven decree
My term of life to be so brief,
That joy I would afar but see,
But taste the bitter cup of grief."

While proceeding, he looked frequently and eagerly around him; for now every old gnarled beech that overhung the path, and every meadow gate brought back some stirring thought or tender memory.

The flush in the western sky was bright, so he shaded his eyes with his hand (though whilom accustomed to more cloudless skies and brighter suns than ours), as if looking for some expected person.

At last an irrepressible exclamation of joy escaped him, as a hat and feather, and a female figure there was no mistaking, met his eye.

He flourished his wide-awake hat, and then quickened his pace, as a little parasol was waved in reply.

In a minute more his arms were around a young girl, who rushed forward, panting and breathless, to meet him, and his lips were pressed to hers in a long and silent kiss.

"Ethel, my own, own Ethel, at last—at *last!*" he exclaimed, in a voice rendered tremulous by excess of emotion; but the young girl for some time was unable to reply. She could but sob upon his breast in the fulness of her joy.

There was a long and tender pause, during which their lips, though silent, were busy enough, perhaps, for "Love," says some one, "is a sting of joy, but a heartache for ever!"

"I knew, dear Ethel, that you would come to meet me," said Morley, "if my letter arrived in time to inform you of the train by which I would leave Liverpool."

"Where you landed last night—only last night—and this evening you are here," she exclaimed.

"Yes, Ethel; but poorer than when I left England," said the young man sadly; "poorer than when I left you," he replied, drawing her arm through his, but still retaining her hand, with both of his folded over it;—"and now tell me how are all at Laurel Lodge. Your papa——"

"Is quite well."

"And your sister Rose—merry little Rose?"

"Well, blooming, and lively as ever."

"Why did she not come to meet me too? My letters have told you, Ethel, that after enduring the misery of three years' exile on the Bonny River, wearily waiting and toiling, transacting the sale of

camwood, ivory, and palm oil, for my owners in Liverpool, and often enduring the frightful fever of that pestilent place——"

"Ah, my poor dear Morley, how it has thinned and wasted you!" said Ethel, looking at him tenderly through her tears.

"I have been compelled to return, almost broken in health, and what is worse, perhaps, in a worldly sense, well-nigh penniless, Ethel, to look for other work at home. But tell me something of yourself, dearest!"

"What can I say?—what can I tell you, Morley, for here, at Laurel Lodge, each day that passes is so like its predecessor?"

"How will Mr. Basset—how will your father welcome me?" asked Morley, anxiously.

"Most kindly, Morley."

"You think so, still," continued the young man.

"Yes. All the more kindly that you have not been favoured by fortune; papa is most generous," replied Ethel.

Morley did not feel quite persuaded of this, but replied:

"Bless him and you for this assurance, darling. Oh, Ethel, how charming your sweet English face seems to me! Do you know, dearest, that for three whole years I have never seen a white woman or a

red cheek? But you have not told me about Rose —no husband yet?"

"She has lovers in plenty, and Jack Page is her adorer," said Ethel smiling; "but there is enough time for Rose to think of marrying. Besides——" but Miss Basset paused and sighed.

"True; she is two years younger than you, Ethel. But our marriage, my love, seems far, far off indeed. Oh, farther than ever! Your father——"

"Will welcome you warmly, of that be assured, but——"

"But what, Ethel? Something weighs upon your mind."

"Many misfortunes have come upon him, misfortunes which we could never have foreseen."

"In your two last letters, you hinted something of losses in London speculations."

"Yes; and consequently, he has come to the resolution of leaving Acton-Rennel — leaving dear Laurel Lodge, where since childhood we have been so happy."

"Leaving Laurel Lodge!" exclaimed Ashton.

"Leaving England itself, Morley," said Ethel, as her fine eyes became suffused with tears again.

"England!" repeated Morley Ashton, breathlessly, and growing very pale indeed.

"Yes; did you not get my letter, in which I told you that papa had been appointed to a vacant

judgeship in the Isle of France, and that in two months or less from this time we shall sail for that distant colony?"

"No—no! I hear all this now for the first time."

"Papa will tell you all about it," continued Ethel, weeping on her lover's shoulder. "He has been appointed one of the three judges in the supreme civil and criminal court of the island."

"Oh, what fatality is this!" exclaimed Morley Ashton, mournfully, as he struck his hands together; "have I returned to England, but to be more than ever an exile, and to learn that you are going where you must school yourself to forget me?"

"Oh, do not say so, Morley!" implored Miss Basset.

"All is ended now," replied her lover; "on earth there is nothing more for me."

"Or *me!*" said Ethel, upbraidingly.

"True; in the selfishness of my own love and grief, I forget yours."

The girl's tears fell fast, and he held her locked to his breast; for there was no eye on them in that sequestered lane, where the evening star, sparkling like a diamond set in amber, alone looked on them.

After a pause:

"See Morley," said the girl, with a lovely smile,

as she drew her ribbon from her bosom; "our split sixpence!"

"Here is the other half, dear Ethel. I used to carry it at my watch-guard, but seals and charms are dangerous gear among the black fellows of the Bonny River, who want every trinket they see, so I thought it safer where your lock of hair lay—next my heart. It was a happy hour in which you gave me that dear lock, my sweet Ethel."

"It was on an evening in summer, when we sat yonder by the old stile at the churchyard. How often have I wished to live that hour over again!" sighed his companion.

"And, sweet one, so we shall in reality, as I have often done in my day-dreams, when far, far away from this dear home and you; but this approaching separation crushes the heart within me, and destroys all hope for the future."

"Take courage, Morley, though I have none," said the young girl, while still her tears fell fast.

Ah me! a split sixpence is of small value, yet here it was riches, for it embodied the hopes, the future, and was all the world to two young and loving hearts!

"Amid the pestilent swamps and mangrove creeks of West Africa, where, from September to June, the steamy malaria rises like smoke in the sunshine, baleful," said Morley, "and laden with

disease and death, O Ethel, my thoughts were with you! There, while engaged in the stupid and monotonous task of daily bartering old muskets, nails, and buttons, powder, rum, and tobacco, for palm-oil, camwood, ivory, lion-skins, and gorgeous feathers, bartering, cajoling, and often browbeating the hideous and barbarous savages of Eboe and Biafra, for our house in Liverpool, the hope of being reunited to you alone sustained and inspired me. In my wretched hut, built of stakes, roofed with palm-leaves, and plastered with mud, or on board the river craft, where we always sleep at some seasons, and during the horrors of the fever which left me the wreck of myself, it was your memory alone that shed light and hope around me. And there was one terrible night, when the breathless air was still and heavy, and when a green slime covered all the ripples of the rotten sea, while my pulse was as fleet as lightning, and my brain was burning, and when I thought that certainly I must soon die, my old friend Bartelot—you have often heard me speak of Tom Bartelot, of Liverpool—conveyed me to his brig, which rode at her moorings inside Foche Point, and he actually cured me, merely by talking for hours of you, Ethel, and of our meeting again—cured me, when, perhaps, the doctor's doses failed. And now, Ethel, poor though I am, broken in spirit, and crushed in hope—this

hour, this moment, and these kisses, dearest, reward me for all, all—toil, danger, suffering; and hoping against hope itself!"

As he spoke he pressed Ethel Basset again to his breast in a long and passionate embrace, and a bright, happy, and lovely smile spread over the face of the young girl.

CHAPTER II.

LAUREL LODGE.

To a certain extent the conversation in the preceding chapter must have served to inform the reader of the relative positions and prospects of those whom, without much preamble, we have introduced—to wit, the hero and heroine of our story.

Morley Ashton was the only son of a once wealthy merchant, whose failure and death had left him well-nigh penniless, to push his fortune in the world as he best could. Thus, as agent of a Liverpool house, he had been, as he stated, broiling for the last three years on the western coast of Africa, with what success the reader has learned from his conversation with Ethel Basset, to whom he had now been engaged for four years.

Ethel was now somewhere about her twentieth year, and though her face was not, perhaps, of that kind which is termed strictly beautiful, it would be difficult to say wherein a defect could be traced.

Her features were regular, and, though somewhat pensive in expression, her occasionally sparkling

and piquant smile relieved them from that insipidity which frequently is the characteristic of a perfectly regular face.

Though, in addition to singing, riding, and waltzing to perfection, she could play rather a good stroke at billiards, and make a good shot at the archery butts, her manner was gentle and graceful, her mind intelligent, and she improved on acquaintance, for few could converse with Ethel Basset for half-an-hour without being somehow convinced that she was lovely.

Her taste in dress was excellent, and one felt that from her little gloved hand, or, rather, from her smoothly-braided hair to the little heels of her kid boots, Ethel was a study.

Her mother's death had early inducted her into the cares and mystery of housekeeping, and made her thoughtful, perhaps, beyond her years.

Mr. Scriven Basset, her father, was a kind and warm-hearted, but somewhat easy-tempered man. In early life he had practised successfully as a barrister in London, where he had contracted a wealthy marriage. After this event he had retired to Acton-Rennel, and there, for the last eighteen years or so, his life had passed quietly and happily.

His tastes were elegant, but expensive; thus his villa of Laurel Lodge was fitted up in a style of no ordinary splendour, and to part with the elegancies

by which he was surrounded would cost some pangs when the time came.

Since a pecuniary change had come upon his affairs, and as he had procured, by the friendship of the M.P. for Acton-Rennel, a legal colonial appointment, all his household goods must be scattered. He knew this, and that there was no help for it: save his dead wife's portrait, and a few equally dear "lares," all must "come to the hammer," as he phrased it, when he and his two girls sailed for their new home in the tropics.

He knew that poor Morley Ashton and his daughter, Ethel, had loved each other in early youth, when the prospects of the former were fair, and his "expectations" unexceptionable; and, though reverses came which blasted these, and rendered a marriage unadvisable, strange to say he did not separate them.

This was but a part of his easy disposition, and he permitted them to correspond, in the hope that, by absence, their mutual regard would gradually die away, as the mere fancy of a boy and girl.

But fortune ordained it otherwise.

Had Morley come home with wealth (three years on the Bonny River will scarcely serve to acquire that), he could have had no objections to their marriage; but there would be many *now* that Morley had come home poor.

Mr. Basset knew, moreover, that Morley, as his last letter had informed Ethel, was to visit them at Laurel Lodge immediately on his return.

"Well, well," thought the easy Mr. Basset, "a few weeks will separate them hopelessly now, so the poor young folks may as well be left to bill and coo together in peace until we sail for the Mauritius, which will be three times as far off as the Bonny River."

This policy was dangerous, and somewhat questionable; but we shall see how it ended.

Proceeding slowly hand in hand, and while such thoughts as these passed through the mind of papa, who, reclining in his easy-chair, was still lingering over his wine and walnuts, watching dreamily the last flush of the sun, that shone down the dingles of Acton Chase, Morley and Miss Basset reached the end of the green lane, where a handsome white gate closed the avenue that led to Laurel Lodge.

It was long and shady; a double row of giant laurels, from which the villa had its name, bordered the approach, and over these rose some venerable sycamores, in which the lazy rooks were croaking and cawing.

Laurel Lodge was a house of irregular proportions, the oldest part having been built in the middle of the seventeenth century, had small latticed windows, with carved mullions of red sandstone. The

modern additions had been built by Mr. Basset, and were lofty and elegant, with large windows, some of which opened to the gravelled walks of the garden.

There was a handsome Elizabethan porch, surmounted, as some thought, rather ostentatiously by the Basset arms, a shield having three bars wavy, supported by two unicorns, armed and collared; and the pillars and arch of this porch, like the roof and clustered chimneys of the older part of the edifice, were covered with masses of dark ivy, fragrant honeysuckle, clematis, and brilliant scarlet-runners.

Through the vestibule beyond, with its tesselated floor and walls, covered with fishing, riding, and shooting appurtenances—rods, nets, boots, whips, guns, and shot-belts—Ethel led Morley to the door of the well-remembered dining-room, where, as we have said, Mr. Basset was still lingering in the twilight, over his full-bodied old port.

Though every feature of this comfortable English villa was known of old to Morley, after his three years' residence in a wigwam on the banks of the Bonny River, its aspect impressed him deeply now, and his eyes wandered rapidly over the furniture of carved walnut and marqueterie, inlaid with representations of game and fruit, the crimson velvet chairs, and old Rembrandt tables of quaint and beautiful designs, the buhl clock on the rich marble mantel-piece, the gorgeous vases of Sèvres and

Dresden china, the ivory puzzles and Burmese idols, of which he had glimpses between the parted silk and damask curtains of the drawing-room windows.

Then there were the Brussels carpets, the grates that glittered like polished silver, the black wolf and dun deer skins, and the eight-light chandeliers of crystal and Venetian bronze, with armour, pictures, statuary, and rare books in gorgeous bindings—in short, the *tout-ensemble* of Laurel Lodge, wherein taste, wealth, luxury, and comfort, were all so rarely and singularly combined, formed to the mind of poor Morley a powerful contrast to the cabin of Tom Bartelot's 200-ton brig, and to the before-mentioned wigwam, with its roof of palm-leaves and trellised walls of reeds and bamboo cane, through which the mosquitoes and the malaria came together by night.

"It is Morley, papa," said Ethel, as they entered; "he has come by the very train we expected, and has walked all the way from Acton station."

"The express from Liverpool; but, ah, my dear sir, it was not even quick enough for me. I would have come by telegraph if I could," said the young man, as Mr. Basset shook him warmly by the hand.

"Welcome back to England! welcome home, Morley!" said he. "Sit beside me, lad, and let me see how you look! Ring for wine and more glasses, Ethel. And so, after all your toil and

danger, worldly matters have not prospered with you, eh ?"

"No, sir," sighed the young man, with his eyes fixed tenderly on Ethel, who had flung her hat and parasol on the sofa, and seated herself beside him ; "I have come back to England a poorer fellow than when I left it."

"I am deeply sorry for that, Morley—port or sherry ? Under the sideboard are some Marcobrunner, Johannisberg, and Sauterne, too, I think—port you prefer ?—then the bottle stands with you. Sorry for your sake, and the sake of others, to hear what you say."

As he spoke he did not glance at Ethel, who was filling Morley's glass ; so she sighed and trembled, for it seemed, by his tone and manner, as if he still acknowledged the fact of her engagement with Morley Ashton, but considered it all at an end now.

"Matters have not prospered with me, either," said Mr. Basset, who was a healthy and florid-looking man, nearer fifty than forty, however, but with the dark hair already well seamed with grey ; "quite the reverse," he continued, emphatically ; "so that I cannot upbraid you with being on worse terms with fortune than myself. You have, of course, heard of all that has occurred ?"

"Ethel has told me all," said Morley, sadly.

"Aye, fortune is fickle, and was well portrayed as blind, and as Shakspere has it:—

> "'Will fortune never come with both hands full,
> But write her fair words still in foulest letters?
> She either gives a stomach and no food,—
> Such are the poor in health; or else a feast,
> And takes away the stomach; such are the rich,
> That have abundance and enjoy it not.'"

"He can console himself with scraps from Shakspere, while my heart is bursting." thought Morley.

"And so Ethel has told you all?" resumed Mr. Basset, cracking another walnut of the fruit which had followed a luxurious dinner.

"Yes, sir, and in doing so has wrung the soul within me."

"Oh, Morley," said Ethel, placing her ungloved hand kindly upon his, "do not talk so mournfully."

"Aye, aye, lad," said Mr. Basset, thinking most of himself, as, with his head on one side, one eye closed, and the other admiring the ruby colour of his wine as it shone between him and the flushed sky, "at my age, though I am not very old, but have many settled habits, it is hard to leave one's native country, and to set out with these tender girls on a long, rough voyage; but needs must—you know the rest."

"And so Ethel and I meet again, only to be separated for ever," exclaimed Morley, while he pressed her hand within his own, and in a tone so mournful that Mr. Basset, who, like every matter-of-fact

Englishman, hated scenes, as they worried him, fidgeted in his chair, and said to Ethel:

"Where is Rose? Has she not seen Mr. Ashton yet?"

"She is with the captain in the conservatory, I think."

Morley, who disliked the formality of being termed "Mr. Ashton," glanced at Ethel, and perceived that a blush was burning on her cheek.

"You did not tell me that you had a visitor," said he.

"We had matters of greater moment to think of, Morley, had we not?" asked Ethel, anxiously.

"Besides, the captain is rather more than a visitor," observed Mr. Basset, laughing.

"More?" said Ashton, with a sickly smile.

"He has spent some few weeks with us," said Ethel.

"Weeks, Ethel?" exclaimed Mr. Basset. "Why, girl, they have run to months now. He is the son of one of my oldest and dearest friends—old Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn—and has seen a great deal of the world. He is a fine, free, rattling fellow, whom I am sure you will like; at least, I hope so, as he proposes to follow, perhaps to go with, us to the Mauritius."

Morley felt his heart sink, he knew not why, at these words—or at what they imported.

"Has there been a game playing here of which I have been kept in ignorance?" thought he.

There was an instinctive fear or jealousy in his mind, and he dared scarcely to look at Ethel. When he did so, there was a painful blush upon her cheek.

"Do not speak of the Mauritius, my dear sir," said he, in an agitated tone. "I cannot conceive or realise the idea of your all being anywhere but here —here at dear old Laurel Lodge."

"Never mind—time soothes all things. Fill your glass, Morley. The Mauritius possesses a splendid climate, though it *is* rather hot from November to April; and there the best of wine can be had almost duty free. Once we are there, who can say, but I may find you a snug appointment, my boy, and Ethel shall write to acquaint you of it."

Now Mr. Basset had in reality no more idea at that moment of procuring any such post for Morley, than of securing one for the personage who resides in the moon, but it suited him to say so at the time; and thus Morley, with a heart full of gratitude, exclaimed:

"Ah, how, sir! how shall I thank you?"

"By working hard and industriously at home in the meantime; by never shrinking from trouble, nor fearing aught that is onerous."

"Such, sir, has ever been my maxim and habit—yet what have they availed me?"

"With your business habits, your father's well-known name and connections in Liverpool, your intimate acquaintance with the west coast trade of Africa, you cannot be at a loss to push your way until you might join us. My friend the captain, as I have said, perhaps goes with us. Has Ethel told you that I am pledged to do something for *him?* But Heaven alone knows what will suit him; he is such an unsettled dog, and has been so long accustomed to wandering ways in California, and among scalp-hunters in Texas, the Rocky Mountains, and everywhere else."

All this sounded ill and unwelcome to Morley, and served to disturb him greatly.

His sallow cheek, long blanched by past illness, burned redly; his eyes were hot and sad in expression. As he drank another glass of port, he felt the crystal rattling on his teeth, and as Ethel watched him anxiously, her little hand stole lovingly into his, which closed tightly upon it.

He perceived that she had still his engagement ring on the proper finger, but another ring—a huge nugget-like affair, with a green stone—was there too!

CHAPTER III.

CRAMPLY HAWKSHAW.

Before Morley had time to think or inquire—if, indeed, inquiry was necessary — concerning this trinket, a lovely, laughing girl of eighteen burst into the room, and kissed him playfully on each cheek.

"Rose," he exclaimed, "Rose, how you have grown. The little girl I left behind has become quite a woman!"

"Why have you delayed so long, Rose?" said Ethel, almost with annoyance. "Did you not know who was here—that Morley had arrived?"

"No. If so, do you think I would have delayed?"

"Yet you have done so."

"Oh, don't be jealous," replied Rose, laughing, though her answer unwittingly galled Morley, and annoyed Ethel more; "we were not flirting, for the captain was only telling me about the flowers of South America; and I merely amuse myself with him and Jack Page, when I can get no one else."

Morley thought of the strange ring on Ethel's

finger, and as he caressed Rose's hand, there arose some unpleasant forebodings in his mind; but at that moment, as lights were brought, and tea announced in the drawing-room, the gentleman whom they styled "captain" entered from the conservatory, throwing back therein the fag-end of his cigar.

Ethel hastened to introduce him to Morley as "Captain Cramply Hawkshaw, the son of papa's old and valued friend."

The captain bowed coldly to Morley, whom he scrutinised from head to foot in a cool and rather supercilious manner.

Hawkshaw was rather under than over the middle height, and possessed a tough and well-knit figure. He had rather a good air and bearing; but at times his manner was absurd and swaggering, and his features, though good and well cut, were decidedly sinister—so much so, that his eyes had in them, occasionally, an expression which, to a keen observer, was most forbidding.

Under his light grey sack coat, he wore no waistcoat, but had his trousers girt by a Spanish sash; a tasselled smoking-cap, like an Egyptian tarboosh, was placed jauntily on his thick mass of curly dark hair. He rejoiced in a luxuriant beard and pair of long whiskers, with which his moustaches mingled.

He interlarded his conversation somewhat profusely with digger terms, Spanish oaths, and Yankee

military phrases, American interjections, and frequent allusions to bowie-knives and six-shooters, and a pair of these weapons always figured on his dressing-table.

In fact, the captain seemed a character, though scarcely worth studying; but one that must frequently appear, more for evil than for good, in these pages.

At a glance, Morley perceived that he was somewhat of a swaggering fool—perhaps worse. He conceived an instinctive aversion for him—an aversion, however, that seemed to be quite mutual—and he marvelled by what idiosyncracy of his nature Mr. Basset could tolerate, or propose to patronise, a guest whose bearing was so questionable, and whose presence was rendered so obnoxious to himself, by his too-evident partiality for Ethel. Nor was this emotion lessened when our hero perceived, that whenever he spoke, a covert sneer stole into the cunning eyes of the captain.

He had been an officer, it appeared, among the Texans, in the Partizan Rangers, or some such distinguished corps; and like Gibbet, in the "Beau's Stratagem," he considered "captain" a good travelling name, and one that kept waiters, grooms, and even railway porters in order; so he still adhered to his regimental rank in the Partizan Rangers, or true-blooded Six-shooters of Texas.

He talked of scalping Red Indians, and shooting Spanish picaroons, as if such were his daily amusement; and when smoking out of doors, would squat on the grass in the mode peculiar to the Texan troopers, among whom he had undoubtedly become a deadly shot, and a good horseman—the only qualities he possessed.

"Papa," said Rose, while Ethel was officiating at the tea-urn, "I wish you to scold Captain Hawkshaw——"

"Why, what has he done now?—been burning your dog's nose with his cigar—smoking it in the drawing-room, or what?"

"He has been laughing at our loveliest azaleas, and saying they were only weeds."

"In Tennessee, my dear Miss Rose, in Tennessee," said the captain, with a deprecating grimace, while caressing his long whiskers; "but your namesake, the rose itself, is perhaps deemed little better than a weed in some countries."

"Where you have been?" inquired Morley.

"But," continued Hawkshaw, without deigning to hear his question, "to me—one who has seen the luscious fruit and gorgeous flower-covered districts of Xalappa, and of Chilpansingo, in the *tierras tiempladas* of Mexico—there is nothing you can show in this tame England of yours that interests you."

"Ours," retorted Rose; "is it not yours too?"

"Nay, nay," said the captain, shaking his head and the tassel of his tarboosh together, "I am a cosmopolitan."

"And care nothing for your country?" said Morley.

"*Caramba!* as we say in Texas, I did so once; but the sun shines brighter in other lands than it does in England."

"You will never make me think so, captain," said Mr. Basset, pushing aside his tea-cup; "for even now my heart sinks with deep depression at the thought of leaving home."

"'Tis nothing when you are used to it, sir—positively nothing. However, you have comfortable diggings here, and some very pretty fixings, too," observed the captain, casting his eyes on the mirrors, the hangings, and vases of Sèvres and Dresden china which decorated the drawing-room; "and thus, perhaps, don't care much about sailing in search of 'fresh fields and pastures new,' eh, squire?—or judge, I suppose we should call you?"

"No, I shall leave my heart behind me in England—in dear old Acton-Rennel. But the sooner we are gone the better; for every day now seems to bind me more to the place where my happiest years have been spent," said Mr. Basset, whose eyes grew moist as his heart filled with the memory

of the wife whom he had lain in the grave but three years before, and with whom Morley Ashton had been an especial favourite, for he was gentle and lovable, yet manly withal.

In her resting-place—under the old yew at Acton church—he felt that she was still near, and still his; but once away from England, the separation would seem complete indeed.

Half shaded and half lit by the drawing-room lights, Ethel's beauty seemed very striking. Tall and dark-eyed, there was something of great delicacy in her cast of features, over which, as we have said, a pensive shadow often rested; especially when her white eyelids and long, dark lashes were drooping.

She was a girl whose whole air and manner, expression of eye, and turn of thought, were the embodiment of refinement; thus the conversation and *brusquerie* of the digger captain were by no means suited to her taste.

On the other hand, Rose was somewhat of a brown-haired hoyden; very lovely in her bursts of wild joy and laughter; all smiles and rosy dimples, and full of waggish expressions, in which the quieter Ethel never indulged; so she rather enjoyed the fanfaronades of Hawkshaw, and mimicked some of his idioms and Spanish exclamations with great success.

Tea over, and the piano opened, Morley hung

fondly over Ethel, who ran her white fingers over the notes of an old and favourite air, which they had often sung together; while the captain, with his feet planted apart on the rich hearthrug, was romancing, or to use his own phraseology, "bouncing away" about the Tierra Caliente, the mighty sierras of New Mexico, and so forth, to Mr. Basset, whose eyes were fixed on the embers that glowed in the bright steel grate, and whose thoughts were elsewhere.

"Your visitor seems quite at home here—a privileged man, in fact," said Morley. "You did not tell me this at first, Ethel," he added, in a lower tone.

Ethel blushed, and replied:

"We have been so used to him that I quite forgot."

"So used—then he has been long here."

"Nearly three months."

"Three months ago, Ethel, I was lying in Tom Bartelot's cabin, off the Bonny River, in hourly expectation of death, and with little hope of being where I am to-night, by your side, dearest, and listening to that old air again. And he has been here three months?"

"Yes, ever since his return from California."

"Is he rich—this captain—what horse-marine corps is he captain of?" continued Morley in an angry whisper.

"Oh, Morley, hush! he is not rich, poor fellow!"

"Poor devil!" muttered Morley.

"But he has realised something; I know not what; though he asserts that he has come back to us poorer than when he went away."

"To us," replied Morley, with growing displeasure, which he strove in vain to conceal. "Who is he?"

"A second cousin, or something of that kind, to papa, and the son of his old friend, Mr. Thomas Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's-inn. But why all these questions?" asked Ethel, looking her lover fully and fondly in the face.

Morley Ashton did not reply, for he felt an instinctive doubt and hatred of Hawkshaw: emotions that rose within his breast he scarcely knew why or wherefore; but, as a Scottish poet has it:

> "Men feel by instinct swift as light,
> The presence of the foe,
> Whom God has marked in after years
> To strike the mortal blow!"

Hawkshaw, while talking apparently to Mr. Basset, had his keen and sinister eyes fixed on the couple at the piano. They seemed plainly enough to indicate similar emotions in his breast, and to say:

"You are one too many in my diggings, Mr. Ashton. *Poco e poco,* I must get rid of you, my fine fellow, at whatever risk or cost!"

CHAPTER IV.

RIVALRY.

For a few days after Morley's arrival, he felt almost happy—happy in the society of Ethel, though the time when she would have to quit Laurel Lodge and sail from England—a time of painful, and it bade fair to be most hopeless separation—hung like a black cloud on the horizon of their future, and, alas! that time was not far distant now.

In three days the air of his native England had begun to redden Morley's cheek, but his eyes were sad in expression, and his heart was at times oppressed by thoughts which even Ethel's smile failed to dispel.

We have said the season was spring, and the last days of April, the time of which Clare sang so sweetly in his "Shepherd's Calendar."

"With thee the swallow dares to come
And cool his sultry wing;
And urged to seek his yearly home,
Thy suns the martin bring.

"Oh, lovely month, be leisure mine,
Thy yearly mate to be.
Though May-day scenes may lighter shine,
Their birth belongs to thee."

All the old familiar places where Ethel and Morley had wandered hand in hand before, they revisited now together.

The old green lanes of the picturesque village of Acton-Rennel, which, with its quaint old tumble-down houses of white-washed brick, and the black oak beams that run through their walls at every angle, its ivied porches and latticed windows, half hidden by wild roses and honeysuckles, is one of the prettiest in England, were wandered in again and again.

Then there was the ancient church, with its moss-covered Lyke-gate and sequestered graveyard; the stile near her mother's tomb, where they had plighted their troth, and split the sixpence which has already figured in our story; Acton Chine, a dreadful chasm in the cliffs which overhung the sea, where the brain grew giddy if the eye attempted to fathom its depth, where the sea-birds wheeled and screamed in mid-air, and where the boom of the breakers on the rocks below came faintly to the ear—all were visited again and again, and never were Morley and Ethel weary of rambling by the margin of glittering Acton Mere, where the snow-white swans "swim double, swan and shadow," or in Acton Chase, scheming and dreaming of a future all their own, when he would strive to rejoin her in the Mauritius, and fortune yet might smile upon them all.

They were too young, too loving, and too ardent to be without such hopes and day-dreams, though more than once Morley Ashton said:

"Oh, Ethel, I thought the time had gone for ever when I could lose myself in a world of my *own* creating."

They spent hours together by Cherrywood Hill and the Norman cross, where, according to old tradition, a Crusader, lord of Acton-Rennel, when returning from Jerusalem, had died of joy at the sight of his English home; but no place loved they more than stately Acton Chase.

This is the remains of one of those grand old English forests, where the Norman kings were wont to hunt of old, and where the marks of King John have been found on more than one of the old trees when cutting them down lately. The storms of a thousand years have scattered the heavy foliage of these old English oaks; but every summer their leaves are thick and heavy again, as in the days when the wild boars whetted their tusks upon their lower stems.

In long rows, trunk after trunk, gnarled and knotty, solemn, brown, and distorted, they stand within the chase, in distance stretching far away, all green with moss or grey with lichens, and with the long feathery fern, which shelters the timid deer, the fleet hare, and the brown rabbit; and where

the golden pheasant lays her eggs, waving high around their venerable roots, some of which stretch far into the brooks and tarns, where the heron wades, and the wild duck swims.

In the centre of this chase stands one vast tree "the monarch of the wood," sturdy, old, and almost leafless now, for its trunk has been thunder-riven.

This is called the Shamble-oak, for thereon, when the lover of fair Rosamond came hither to hunt with the Norman lords of Acton-Rennel, they were wont to hang the slaughtered deer, ere it was roasted and washed down with Rhenish wine, in the old oak hall of Acton Manor, a ruin now, as Cromwell's cannon left it.

Every tree on which, Orlando-like, Morley had carved the name and initials of his mistress, was sought for again; every familiar spot was revisited, and Captain Hawkshaw found, to his rage and mortification, two emotions which he could not at all times skilfully conceal, that Morley was always with Ethel, while he was left to amuse Rose, who always teased or quizzed him, or with her companions, who seemed to dislike him, to play chess with Mr. Basset, to the enjoyment of a cheroot, or to his own society, which no one envied less than himself.

Moreover, the farewell visits of friends, and entertainments provided for them, afforded Morley and Ethel many opportunities of being undisturbed to-

gether; and had it not been that the captain's self-esteem was wounded, and his inordinate pride hurt, by the preference which Miss Basset showed for her old and affianced lover, Morley, he might have found plenty of consolation, for among the visitors at Laurel Lodge were some very attractive girls; but Hawkshaw's mode of making himself agreeable, even when most disposed to do so, seldom pleased.

There was something sinister in his keen eye, and a quaint *brusquerie* in his manner, that made ladies instinctively shrink from him.

"Pshaw—*caramba!*" said he, on one occasion; "it is very odd that I am always nervous when among crinolines and crape bonnets."

"Pray," asked Morley, with a disdainful smile, "how comes that to pass?"

"You forget the many years I have spent among Red Indian squaws and brown Mexican donzellas."

"Your nervousness should make you more choice in your expressions," said Lucy Page, a tall, grave friend of Ethel's, a handsome girl, with whom Hawkshaw was walking, as they were all promenading one evening, after tea, among the trees of Acton Chase.

"Though not much in the habit of receiving advice, I shall hope to profit by yours, Miss Page," said Hawkshaw, bowing with a malevolent smile.

"Pardon me," continued Miss Page, colouring

under the short veil of her round hat; "I do not presume to offer advice to so travelled a man; but, for all that, I know a very ugly word may be veiled in your favourite Spanish."

The captain laughed so loudly, that the young lady bit her lips with vexation, and Rose saucily inquired if he were vain of his teeth.

"I might be, if I had not seen yours, which the father of dentists and mother of pearl might envy," said he, with a mock reverential bow. "But we are sparring, it seems," he said, with a slight flush on his cheek, as Miss Page turned haughtily away and entered into conversation with Mr. Basset. But our officer of the Partizan Rangers was not to be easily put down, and to prove this, he began to whoop noisily at the cattle, which were browsing under the trees.

"Hah, demonio!" he exclaimed; "if I had a lasso here, ladies, I would show you how we loop the cattle in Texas. Many a wild bull, I have overtaken with my horse at full gallop, and fairly tailed him."

"What may that be?" asked Rose Basset, who loved, as she said, "to draw the Texan warrior out."

"Cutting the poor animal's tail off, I suppose," suggested Miss Page.

"Not at all," said Hawkshaw, curtly.

"Then what is it, pray?" asked Ethel.

"Technically, it is catching him by the tail when

at full speed, and slewing him round like a ship in stays; that is what we call 'tailing' in Texas."

"But to lasso?" began one of the ladies, to whom the captain's explanation was not very lucid.

"That is to catch Master Bull by casting a looped rope round his horns."

"Have you ever achieved this?" asked Morley.

"I should think so—rather, and a great deal more," replied the captain, almost contemptuously. "I once caught one in midstream, when swimming the Arroya del Colorado, a salt arm of the sea, more than eighty yards broad, while a wild pampero (that is, a gale of wind, ladies) was rolling the waves in mountains up the bight; and with the same lasso, not long after, I caught a rascally picaroon, just about your size, Mr. Ashton, by the neck, and well-nigh garotted him, when I was riding past at full gallop."

"And the result?" said Morley, disdaining to notice something offensive in Hawkshaw's tone, when addressing him.

"Well, the result was mighty unpleasant for the poor devil of a picaroon," replied Hawkshaw, as the whole party rested themselves on the soft velvet grass of the lawn, when he began to amuse himself by tossing a clasp-knife of very ugly aspect among the buttercups, and skilfully decapitating one at every toss.

"Oh, pray tell us all about it!" exclaimed Rose, smiling brightly under her parasol, and drawing two very pretty feet, cased in bronze boots, close under her crinoline.

Hawkshaw seemed here to recal some real memory of his wild and wandering life, for a dark, savage, and malignant gleam came into his eyes, while a hectic flush crossed his weather-beaten cheek, and he began thus:

"I was travelling through the Barranca Secca, which lies between Xalappa and the Puebla de Perote, on the long, hot, dusty road which leads from Vera Cruz to Mexico.

"Though I had not a farthing in my pocket, and knew not how I was to procure a supper for myself or my horse on reaching Orizaba (for I had spent all my ready money), I was well mounted, and well armed, with a first-rate six-shooter, a bowie-knife, and carried, moreover, a lasso, for whatever might come to hand—to catch a stray *cavallo*, a wild bull, whip nuts from a tree, to loop in a chocolate-coloured *raterillo*, which means a thief, or, perhaps, a run-away nigger.

"The sun was setting behind the Cordilleras de los Ondes, when I entered a *quibrada*, as the Spaniards name it, a deep gully—all great adventures take place in ravines and defiles; but I am more practical than most men, and so call things by their right

names—so it was a gully in the mountains, worn, bored, and torn by the waterspouts and thunder-storms of ages; but lofty trees that towered above the underwood of aloes and azaleas—azaleas to which yours are weeds, indeed, Rose—overshadowed it, and cast a gloom upon the road, which seemed to enter a species of sylvan tunnel. I took a hearty pull of aquadiente from the leathern *bota* at my saddle-bow, and lit a Manilla cheroot, to make the most of the 'shining hour.'

"This portion of the Barranca Secca had a particularly bad name as the haunt of robbers, and there was more than one wooden cross, covered with green creepers, and many a pile of stones by the wayside marking the lonely and unconsecrated grave of a bandit, who had been shot by the National Guard of Orizaba, the soldiers of Santa Anna, long ago, or where the victim of the bandido's knife or rifle lay.

"Well, anxious to get through the gully, I was going at a fine rasping pace, when I met a man, armed with a long rifle, and carrying a knife and brace of pistols in the red and yellow sash which girt up his blue cotton breeches. His tawny breast, feet, and legs, from the knees at least, were bare, and a sheepskin jacket, tied by a cocoa-nut cord, dangled over his right shoulder.

"I recognised him at once, as Zuares Barradas, a young man, whom, with his brother Pedro, I had met

at the gold-diggings on the Feather River, and with whom I had travelled from the seaport of San Diego, when they had both deserted their ship to try their fortunes at the mines.

"'What—capitano, is it you?' he exclaimed, 'welcome to the Barranca Secca.'

"'*Muchos gratias,* senor,' said I, having some anxiety to be on good terms with the fellow.

"'How far do you go to-night?'

"'To Orizaba.'

"'A light, if you please, senor—I have lost all my lucifers.'

"He was a sallow, dark-skinned, half-blood; that is, half Mexican, half Spaniard, and wholly devil—partly seaman, partly landsman, and wholly pirate in spirit."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Rose, "were you not terrified to be alone with such a person in such a place? I am sure I should have screamed and died of fright."

Hawkshaw smiled and continued:

"His eyes, black and sparkling, told of a cunning equal to that of the serpent in the scripture, and of a ferocity that death alone could tame. He had neither beard nor moustache, for he was too young; but his raven hair hung in masses beside his olive cheeks, and he had silver rings in his ears.

"Such was Zuares Barradas, who, like his brother,

Pedro, feared nothing on earth, and respected nothing in heaven."

"Was, you say—is he now dead?" asked Ethel.

"You shall hear; but such fellows don't die easily, Miss Basset, be assured.

"'Are you looking for game?' I asked.

"'*Por vida del demonio*, that I am!' said he, with a savage grin, 'but it is neither the elk, the jaguar, or the vinado I seek.'

"'What then, *amigo mio?*'

"'You must know,' began the young rascal, 'that Pedro and I have spent all our money—every duro, yes, every quartil—he at the wineshop, and I on Katarina, the barmaid at the Pasada de Todos Santos, and that other jade with the wheel—what's her name?—Fortune has since been as unkind to me as Katarina, with whom I parted on bad terms.'

"'You quarrelled?' said I.

"Zuares looked keenly into the gully, listened a moment, and then resumed his bantering style.

"'When last I visited the posada, Katarina had on a very handsome crucifix and pair of silver bracelets, so I took them off, saying, "Senora, a beautiful bosom, and such pretty hands as yours, require no adornment. Permit me to relieve you of these baubles—they are absurd!" She was about to permit herself the luxury of screaming, but I touched my knife and quieted her. Since then I

have been left to shift for myself, as my father and mother too have turned their venerable backs upon me.'

"'I have not a coin, Zuares,' said I, with growing alarm, lest the underwood of aloes might be full of such evil weeds as the younger Barradas. 'Surely you mean not to rob me?'

"'Of course not; you are a *bueno camarada*. But as Pedro and I came through the Barranca Secca we heard that an old woman of the Puebla de Perote, who sold some cattle at Orizaba, will pass this way about nightfall. She is veiled, and has the blessed duros concealed among her hair, for fear of thieves—ha! ha! for fear of thieves,' he continued, pirouetting about, and slapping the butt of his musket. 'Pedro watches one part of the road and I the other, so the money we shall have—(what use has an old woman for it?)—even should we take her scalp with it.'

"'Perhaps her hair may be false,' said I.

"'Then I shall be saved some trouble.'

"'She may resist, and make an outcry,' said I.

"'Then so much the worse for her,' said the young fellow, with a fierce scowl, as he placed his hand under his sheepskin jacket into the Spanish sash, where his long knife was stuck.

"'In this place none would hear her,' said I.

"'There you mistake,' he replied. 'There are

more than forty free bandidos lurking in the Barranca, and Pedro and I have no wish to lose the prize we have tracked so far. Maldito, see, 'tis she!' he exclaimed, as a dark female figure became visible about a hundred yards off, traversing an eminence, over which the road went, and thence descended into a hollow. 'Till I return, stay where you are, and beware how you follow me!'

"With what thoughts, you may imagine, I sat on my horse, afraid to interfere in the matter. Many a rifle might be covering me from among the wood of aloes and mangrove trees; so what was the old woman to me, that I should risk a bullet-hole in my skin to save her duros?

"Zuares Barradas descended into the hollow, which was dark almost as night, so thick were the trees overhead, though the setting sun gilded brightly their topmost branches.

"Suddenly I heard a shriek ring through the rocky gully, and Zuares rushed out, with what appeared to be a bundle in his hand; but it was a bundle from which the blood was trickling among the summer dust of the roadway.

"'She resisted, and fought and bit like a tiger-cat, *la muger muy vieja* (the old beldame),' he exclaimed, with an oath, 'so I have cut off her head to save time.'

"Kneeling down, with the bloody knife in his

teeth, he proceeded hastily to unroll the veil, and the long grizzled hair of his victim, to secure the money, which was concealed among the thick plaitings of the latter.

"While doing this, I observed that he carefully kept the dead face *downwards,* as if he lacked the courage to look upon it.

"Thirty silver duros, with the eagle and thunderbolt, soon glittered in his hands; but he dropped them, as if they had been red-hot, and threw up his arms in dismay, on finding among the folds of the torn veil a little piece of cow's horn, tipped with silver—an amulet worn by women as a protection against the *mal de ojo,* or evil eye.

"On beholding this, a shudder passed over his brown and muscular frame, and turning up the dead face, now livid, white and horrible, with fallen jaw, and glazed eyes, he exclaimed, in a piercing and terrible voice:

"'*Mia madre! mia madre!*'

"He had decapitated his own mother!"

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICION.

While the ladies listened breathlessly, and uttered proper exclamations of horror, the narrator, with their permission, lighted a cigar, and, squatting on the ground in the Texan mode, continued his story.

"Zuares grovelled in the dust, so dismounting, I picked up the blood-spotted dollars, and was in the act of pocketing them, when a musket flashed in the dark, leafy hollow, a bullet whizzed past my left ear, and——"

"What! did you actually take the poor woman's dollars?" exclaimed Morley.

"Of course," replied Hawkshaw, coolly; "would you have had me leave them on the mountain road?"

"Yes; perhaps no; but——"

"*Caramba!*" said Hawkshaw, angrily, but using his favourite Spanish interjection, "in such a country as that, I was not such a thundering muff."

"Go on, please. What followed, pray?" asked Ethel.

"I took up the money that lay on the road. You,

Mr. Ashton, may call it robbery, perhaps—granted. But what do the best men in England, yearly, at the Oaks, the Derby, and elsewhere? Oh, there is no such thing as robbery on the turf, of course. Well, where was I?"

"A musket was fired at you," said Rose.

"Exactly, and then I saw Pedro Barradàs, a vast and bulky Spanish seaman, whom, unfortunately, I knew too well, advancing towards me, with his Albacete knife tied by a handkerchief bayonet-wise to the muzzle of his piece. He was a ferocious fellow, and I knew that, when he and Zuares were so far inland, rapine and robbery were their sole objects and means of subsistence.

"These brothers once carried off a poor boy, the son of a widow, who resided near the Laguna d'Alvarado, and kept him among their companions in the mountains, till his mother was well-nigh distracted. A ransom of fifty duros was required by a padre, whom they sent as their messenger. She sent twenty—all she could borrow or scrape together; but, instead of her boy, she received back one of his ears, with a message that other parts of him, perhaps his *cabeza* (head) would follow, if the fifty duros were not forthcoming.

"The money was collected and intrusted to the padre, who, unknown to himself, was followed by twenty soldiers, sent by the commandant of Orizaba,

with special orders to shoot the Barradas and their companions.

"Pedro saw these men approaching, and, believing that the padre had betrayed them, he pocketed the dollars, and with his stiletto stabbed the bearer and the boy to the heart, and fled to the woods of the Rio Blanco.

"Such was the character of the fellow who now advanced against me.

"I sprang upon my horse, unwound my lasso, took the slack of it in my right hand, and, swinging the loop round my head, rode full at him, as I could not encounter him on foot, or escape his aim on horseback, if I permitted him again to reload.

"Shrinking back with an oath and a cry, he twice eluded me; but on the third cast I looped him round the neck, drew the lasso over my right shoulder, stooped hard over my horse's mane, and spurring onward, dragged him headlong over the dusty road, for more than two hundred yards.

"His shrieks were soon stifled, and when I reined up, the blood was gushing from his mouth; his limbs were quivering, and his face was blackened by strangulation; but he was not dead, however.

"Dismounting, I released the loop of the lasso from his bare and muscular throat, and then rode off at full speed, leaving the two brothers, and the mother, whom, in their cruelty and ignorance, they

had tracked and destroyed, all lying on the mountain path together. I never looked behind me, nor did I draw bridle till reaching Orizaba, which lies sixty miles westward of Vera Cruz, where I put up at the Posada de Todos Santas (or All Saints) about midnight, when the volcano of Citlaltepetel, which rises from amid forests of vast extent, and covered with perpetual snows, was flaming in the sky eighteen thousand feet above me.

"And there, in Orizaba, the duros sent me by fortune in the Barranca Secco, procured me a good supper, a bottle of vino-blanco, well iced, from the hands of the fair Katarina—a most enchanting fluid it proved, after such a devil of a hot ride. Then I went to bed, and blessed myself that I could sleep with an easier conscience than either Zuares or Pedro Barradas."

This pleasant little episode in the captain's wandering Mexican life, made the listeners regard each other, and him especially, with some surprise.

The girls looked at him blankly under their parasols, and through the short black veils of their little round hats, for the actual horror of the story impressed them less than a certain cool gusto in Hawkshaw's manner, combined with his grim, matter-of-fact mode of relating it; but this story of the Barradas was only one of many such as he related incidentally from time to time.

"It is no easy matter," says Goethe, "for one man to understand another, even if he bring the best disposition with him. What, then, is to be expected if he bring the smallest *prejudice?*"

Aware that he was a rival—a cunning, a daring, and so far as could be gleaned from his conversation, an unscrupulous one, Morley, as may well be supposed, was strongly prejudiced against Hawkshaw, and felt certain that, under a considerable amount of bombast and external *bonhomie*, he concealed a character that was alike mean, fierce, and avaricious; but "every man," says the writer just quoted, "has something in his nature which, were he to reveal it, would make us hate him."

"And such creatures as these were your companions in South America?" exclaimed Ethel Basset, almost with a shudder.

"Do not say so," replied Hawkshaw, who, perhaps, feared that he had been too communicative "but travelling, in such countries especially, acquaints one with strange bed-fellows and strange boon companions, too. But enough of the Barradas, who have likely been shot or garotted long ago. How delightful is this soft grass under the shady trees. By Jove, we are better here than in some places where I have been; the plains of Vera Cruz, for instance, among hot sand, mosquito flies, that sting like wasps, prickly pears, and herds of wild

bisons; but, with all its charms, this is a cold-blooded country, this England of yours, Mr. Morley, and ill-suited to such a spirit as mine."

"Is it not your country as well as ours?" asked Morley, coldly.

"I scolded him for speaking thus the other night, when he laughed at my azaleas," said Rose, shaking her parasol at the offender.

"Well, I was certainly raised here, which is my misfortune, and not my fault; but I have been so long where the bowie-knife or revolver, the hatchet or rifle settle all quarrels, disputes, jealousies, or impertinent interferences," he continued with an unfathomable smile, "that I can ill tolerate the system——"

"Of a well-regulated police," interrupted Morley, closing the captain's sentence with a meaning smile, that was not unlike his own.

"*Caramba!*—yes; and, then, on the wild prairies, while one has a good musket and ammunition, we are so careless of money."

"The money of others especially," said Ethel.

Hawkshaw bit his nether lip; but observed with a smile:

"Be assured, my dear Miss Basset, that when in South America I did not squander my cash among tradesmen, or ruin myself by paying tailors and bootmakers."

What Hawkshaw meant by this was not very apparent; but when the little party resumed their promenade among the grand old trees of Acton Chase, Morley gradually drew Ethel somewhat apart from the rest. After being silent some time:

"I entertain a horror of that fellow!" said he; "and I am astonished that your father tolerates or patronises him. Excuse me, dear Ethel; but I cannot help saying so."

"You mean Mr. Hawkshaw?"

"Pray don't omit his rank of captain—yes, Hawkshaw—a most decided aversion for him."

"Though I don't like him, Morley, I am sorry to hear this," said Ethel, gently, while colouring a very little.

"Why?"

"He is such a favourite with papa—for his father's sake, I grant you, rather than his own—for old Mr. Hawkshaw was, indeed, a great and valued friend to papa, when early in life he much required one."

"Listen, Ethel, and, dearest, do be candid with me—has Hawkshaw ever spoken of love to you?"

"Frequently, before you came," said Ethel, smiling.

"D—— his impudence!"

"Oh, fie, Morley!" said she, folding her hands upon his arm, and looking up smilingly in his face.

"And I must quietly endure his presence here, after this most annoying admission from you!"

"There is something worse still you may have to endure," said Ethel, sadly; "the voyage on which he may too probably accompany us."

Morley felt a keen pang in his breast at these words; he glanced, too, at the strange ring on Ethel's finger, which an emotion of pride or pique had hitherto prevented him from referring to.

"It seems preposterous, Ethel," he exclaimed, "that this man should propose to accompany you, while I, your affianced lover, am left behind; and, by Heaven, it shall not be so!"

"Dearest Morley!"

"Poor as I am, Ethel, I am not so poor that I cannot pay my way to the Mauritius—in the same ship, too, and I shall write this very night to London about it!"

"Oh, Morley—oh, what happiness!"

"I shall take a berth in the forecastle bunks, rather than be left behind. You have now at your breast a flower that Hawkshaw gave you."

"A flower!"

"Yes, a wild rose."

"I had quite forgotten it; but let this show you how it is valued;" said Ethel, laughing, as she threw it on the ground, and placed thereon a pretty

little foot, cased in a kid boot, with a heel of very military aspect.

"My own dear Ethel!" exclaimed Morley, pressing to his heart her hand and arm, which leant so lovingly and confidingly on his, "I have one thing more to ask you about—this queer-looking ring with the green stone!"

"Well?"

"Is it a gift of his?"

"Yes; when he first came to Laurel Lodge he begged me to accept of it, saying that it was found in Mexico, at some battle fought by Juarez, at a place with an unpronounceable name."

"It was more likely found as he found those dollars about which he told us some time ago."

"Mercy! do you think so?"

"I am inclined to think the worst of him!" said Morley angrily and emphatically.

"Oh! Morley, do not let prejudice blind you, and do not condescend to be jealous of him," said Ethel, imploringly; "I would return the ring, but that the act might affront him, giving, moreover, to its first acceptation, a significance, an air of importance, I have no wish should be attached to it. Do you understand me, Morley, dear? Then he is papa's friend and guest."

Morley was pale with concealed annoyance.

Ethel perceived this, and that he was distressed.

by the double prospect of a rival living in the same house with her, and embittering the few days that intervened before their long—alas! it might be final—separation.

With her eyes full of tears, she drew Hawkshaw's gift from her finger, and gave it to Morley, begging him to return it to the donor at a fitting time.

This was, to say the least of it, a most unwise request, with which he readily enough undertook to comply, and secured the ring in his portemonnaie, as they rejoined their friends, who were now gathered round the shamble oak in the centre of the chase.

When Morley reflected on the story told by Hawkshaw, it seemed that there must have existed between him and those lawless brothers, Pedro and Zaures Barradas, a greater intimacy than he had admitted in the narrative; and he became convinced that, under a nonchalant and swaggering air, his rival concealed a real spirit of latent ferocity, with a dark character that had been inured to cruelty and promptitude to vengeance, when such could be taken with safety and secrecy; so Morley Ashton resolved, but somewhat vainly, as we shall show, to be on his guard against him.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR THE LAST TIME.

Mr. Scriven Basset had made all his arrangements for departing to his legal charge in the distant Isle of France.

He had secured passages for himself, his two daughters, and an old and valued servant, Nance, or, as she was more frequently termed, Nurse Folgate, in the *Hermione*, a fine ship of 500 tons burden, which was advertised to sail from the London Docks in fourteen days from the time we now write of.

Meanwhile, poor Morley resolved to make the most of the present, and endeavoured to shut his eyes to the future; but while striving to be blindfolded, he knew that this future, with all its separation and sorrow, its fears, and, alas! its doubts, must ensue.

There were times when Morley thought of asking Ethel to bind herself to him in writing; but he soon thrust the idea aside as mistrusting and melodramatic. There were other occasions when

he actually thought of imploring her to contract a stronger tie, by consenting to a secret marriage; but it seemed an abuse of her kind and easy father's hospitality, and a violation of the trust reposed in him, and this, too, he abandoned, resolving to trust to Ethel's faith, to patience, and to time.

Poor Morley! He knew how dark and lonely seemed the three years of their past separation, and he felt keenly how much more lonely and dark would be the vague years of that which was to follow.

Then the pictures he drew of this long severance from Ethel—the voyage by sea for so many weeks, so many months; a residence in another land, with strangers, rich and attractive, perhaps, about her—a severance during which she would be hourly exposed to the attentions and addresses of a rival so cunning, so artful, so enterprising, and, in some respects, not so unpleasing, as Cramply Hawkshaw, filled him with intense apprehension, anxiety, and disgust.

"Why should I not go with her?" thought he, suddenly. "The money which will enable me to do so I shall only squander here in England, it may be, without avail, while there, in the Mauritius, a new sphere will be open to me."

Like all impulsive people, on this new idea he

acted at once. He wrote to the agents for the *Hermione* to secure a cabin passage for himself, a measure which Captain Hawkshaw, for some reason as yet unknown, had omitted to take, though Mr. Basset had always more than half indicated that he was to accompany him abroad.

Now, when it was announced and definitely settled at Laurel Lodge that Morley was to go, the spite and disappointment of the ex-digger and *soi-disant* captain of Texan Rangers was ill-concealed indeed; for, doubtless, he considered it no joke to lose all chance of a lovely bride, with a fair prospect of getting—excuse us for using his own phraseology—"into comfortable diggings," under the wing of a colonial official.

After Morley wrote to London, two days elapsed without an answer coming from the agents, and the anxious dread of Ethel and himself, lest there was no more accommodation in the *Hermione*, was so great that he vowed he would go before the mast rather than be left behind.

Already Laurel Lodge had a somewhat dismantled aspect. Bookshelves were emptied in the library; the walls were denuded of pictures in dining-room and drawing-rooms; choice plants in the conservatory and rare flowers in the garden had been given away to the Pages and other old friends.

Chests, bales, and boxes, corded, labelled, and all

very "outward bound" in aspect, encumbered all the hall and vestibule, indicating but too surely that the Bassets were on the eve of departure; and now came their last Sunday in the old village church.

Morley Ashton and Captain Hawkshaw were in the same pew with Mr. Basset's family.

The curate who officiated was an old friend of theirs, and his voice faltered as he besought the prayers of the congregation for those who were about to leave them, and set forth on a long and perilous journey.

Then Ethel felt her timid heart tremble, and Rose sobbed under her veil, while many a moistened eye turned kindly to the Bassets' pew; but a smile curled the moustached lip of the Texan Ranger, as much as to say :

"Speak to me of danger—pah!"

The solemnity of the place, and the soft familiar music of the choir, and the old organ pealing from its shadowy loft, soothed the grief and agitation of Ethel's heart, though a keen pang shot through it, when she reflected, that when again the sacred melody rang through that ancient church, only seven days' hence, she might perhaps be separated from Morley, and most assuredly would be ploughing the sea, while he—ah! he might come here, where they had last sat side by side, and feel himself alone—so terribly alone!

Some such thoughts were swelling in the breast of Morley Ashton, for his eyes were turned on her with a deep and unfathomable expression of tenderness, while hers was bent upon her prayer-book—it might be on vacancy.

There was a wonderful charm in those snowy lids and downcast lashes, so dark, so silky, and in the pure, pale loveliness of the whole face of Ethel, especially when contrasted with the rounder and rosier beauty of her younger sister.

Over the high oak pews, quaint with old carvings, dates, and monograms; the marble tablets, where lay the men of yesterday; the time-worn tombs of those whose rusted helmets, spurs, and gloves of mail, erst worn in many a field against the Scot and Gaul, now hung over them amidst dust and cobwebs; over the painted windows, through which the sunshine poured its rays of many colours; over the bowed heads of the hushed congregation; over the altar, before the rail of which, during many a day-dream in Africa, he had knelt in fancy, the bridegroom of Ethel Basset;—over all these the eye of Morley wandered, but to fall, again and again, on her soft and downcast face, her sweet mouth and long lashes, and on her little tremulous hand, cased in its pale kid glove, that touched his from time to time, as they read from the same prayer-book.

"No answer yet from London!" was ever in his

mind, and keenly in anticipation he felt the nervous dread of being severed from her after all.

But now the morning service was ended; the organ was pealing its farewell notes from the dark recesses of the vaulted loft, and the Bassets rose up to depart.

In that old pew the people of the parish had seen their heads bowed in prayer when Ethel and Rose had nestled beside their mother, now at rest in the adjacent graveyard — nestled with their shining heads bent over the same volume, and now they were on the verge of womanhood. Ere evil fortune came upon them, so good had those girls been to the sick, the poor and ailing, that a crowd of village matrons, the mothers of the blooming Dollys and hobnailed Chawbacons, blessed them with hands outstretched; and so deeply moved were all present, that when they passed down the aisle and issued—from amid those flakes of many-coloured light that fell on oaken pew and carved pillar—through the deep old gothic porch, into the grassy churchyard, where the tombstones that stand so thickly were shining in the sun that streamed in his glory down the far extent of Acton Chase, poor Ethel burst into a passion of tears, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, Morley!—oh, papa!" she exclaimed; "how sad it is to do anything, and know that we are doing it for the last time!"

Morley pressed the hand that laid upon his arm.

"I have had the same emotion in my heart all day, Ethel, dear," said he, "with a sadness for which I cannot account. I have no one now to cling to but you. I never had a brother or sister. My father died, as you know, before I went far away to Africa, and now he sleeps by my mother's side, in yonder old churchyard, among the Denbigh hills; and their graves, of all our English ground the dearest spot to me, I shall never look on more."

"My poor Morley!" said Ethel, her eyes sparkling through tears of affection.

"Oh, how plainly still I can draw their faces and forms, as my mind goes back quickly and feverishly at times over the past days of infancy, when their kind eyes smiled on me under our old roof. How different seems that early home and parental care, which to a child are as a fortress and tower of strength, when compared to——"

"Our diggings in manhood, eh?" interrupted Hawkshaw, who had joined them unperceived, and thus cut short Morley's intended peroration.

The latter repressed his rising wrath with difficulty. Jealousy of Hawkshaw, perhaps, he had not; but that Ethel should be annoyed by the society of such a man was repugnant to him. But how was he to act?

He could not quarrel with Hawkshaw while they

both shared, for a brief period now, the hospitality of Mr. Basset; and to retire from Laurel Lodge would but serve to leave him in full possession of the field, and to embitter the last few days they would all spend together in good old England, and in the home of their early loves and best associations.

With Morley, Ethel and Rose had paid a visit for the last time to all their old haunts and rambles. At Acton Chase, now almost in the full foliage of an early summer; at Acton Chine, that frightful cliff which overhangs the sea; at the moss-grown Norman cross; on Cherrywood Hill, where in childhood they had often sought in vain, among the long grass and the pink bells of the foxglove, for the elves and fairies of whom they had read so much in nursery lore.

They paid a last visit to the ivy-clad cottages of all their old pensioners and favourites in the village, to each and all of whom they gave some little memento; to the churchyard stile; to every place connected with the memory of their past happiness; and, lastly, to their mother's grave the sisters paid a visit that was sad and solemn.

Some daisies which grew there Ethel gathered and placed in her breast, and with something of the same spirit which often inspires the poor expatriated Highland emigrant, she made up a little packet of

English earth to take with her to her new home beyond the sea.

She sadly viewed their garden, where a blush of summer roses, of crimson daisies, gorgeous lilacs, and sweetbriar had now replaced the earlier flowers of spring, the yellow pansies, the purple auriculas, the golden crocuses, the pale white snowdrop, and she wondered if such things grew in the distant Isle of France.

It was on her return alone from a farewell visit in the village, that she was overtaken by Hawkshaw, when something like an unpleasant crisis took place in the relations which had subsequently existed between them. At that time Morley was absent, having walked to the Acton railway station, for the purpose of telegraphing along the London and North-Western line, to the agents of the *Hermione*, for intelligence regarding his berth and passage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REJECTION.

Hawkshaw had been rambling in Acton Chase alone, when he met Ethel, or overtook her, near the great old shamble oak, which we have before mentioned.

He had been pondering on the state of his affairs and finances, which were far from flourishing. His pocket-money was almost gone, and for a time he had been reduced to clay pipes and cheap cubas. He was without the means, in fact, of travelling so far as the Mauritius; and as Mr. Basset—good-natured, easy-tempered Mr. Basset—whose character had no particular point save perfect amiability, though half intending or adopting the idea that Cramply, the son of his "old friend Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn," should accompany him abroad, had never made an offer of means to enable him to do so; thus our Texan Ranger was somewhat at his wit's end on the evening in question—an evening of which, at that moment, he little foresaw the end; and he rambled under the stately oaks of the ancient chase with a cloudy expression of eye, though still

wearing the melodramatic scarlet cap and Spanish sash, which had excited considerable speculation among the rustic hobnails of Acton-Rennel.

Hawkshaw had imbibed rather too much of Mr. Basset's Amontillado after dinner; this, with some champagne, of which he had partaken freely during that meal, and a glass of brandy, imbibed as a corrective after it, rendered him somewhat blind alike to consequences, and to foregone conclusions. Thus, on suddenly meeting Ethel in such a secluded place, he resolved on speaking more openly of his love to her.

Had Mrs. Basset survived at this period of our story, there can be little doubt that she would speedily have relieved Ethel from the presence and advances of such a lover, despite her husband's reverence for the memory of "old Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn." As the matter stood now, the village gossips, at the tap of the "Royal Oak," the blacksmith's forge, and other rustic resorts, had long since settled the whole affair. Ethel was the affianced of Morley Ashton, and poor little Rose was assigned to "the captain with the red thingumbob cap."

"'Fortune favours the brave;' 'nothing venture, nothing have.' They are two old saws; but I must keep them in view, nevertheless," thought Hawkshaw, as he threw away his cigar and joined Ethel Basset,

on whose cheek there was a charming flush, for the May evening was warm. She had been walking fast, to learn what tidings the electric wire had for her and Morley; and the last farewell of an old cottager, who dwelt by the skirts of the chase, had agitated her.

The captain opened the trenches by some of the remarks usually made about the weather, and the beauty of the evening; then he adverted to his good fortune in meeting her, especially in such a place; how much he had longed for an opportunity of speaking with her alone, as his future happiness or misery would be the result—an opportunity that had not occurred for some time (since Morley Ashton's arrival he might have said), and so, after sundry awkward pauses, he proceeded to declare his regard, his esteem, his passion for Ethel.

She listened to him with considerable annoyance and concern, but barely slackened her pace as he spoke.

The extreme self-possession, the quiet manner, the cool and gentle aspect of Ethel, baffled Hawkshaw, and irritated him so much, that there were times, when in his self-communings he actually felt a doubt whether he loved or—*hated* her!

And now, while he spoke of love, volubly, but yet with agitation, she continued to fit on a lemon-coloured kid glove, with provoking care and ac-

curacy, on her small, pretty hand, and seemed to be fully more occupied with it than with him.

The very movements of her hands, the white parting of her smooth, dark hair—all betokened a placidity which, as he said, mentally, "served to worry him." Yet Ethel was greatly agitated, though Hawkshaw's eye had not the acuteness, nor had he the refinement, to be aware of it.

"I am deeply grieved to hear all this, Captain Hawkshaw," said she; "for already you must be assured," she added, in a tremulous voice—"assured that I cannot love you in return."

"Now, Ethel, call me Hawkshaw, Cramply, which you will, or anything you please that is not formal, but do not, for Heaven's sake, speak so coldly. And so—and so it is quite impossible?"

"Quite," she said in a low voice.

"Wherefore? Am I so hideous?"

"Far from it."

Hawkshaw was aware of her undisguised preference for Morley Ashton; and though he knew, or feared what her reply would be, the wine he had imbibed, or some strange emotion that stirred within his breast, made him urge the hopeless matter still.

"Ethel," said he, softly, but through his clenched teeth, and while his cheek grew pale with suppressed passion; "you will, perhaps, have the kindness to explain?"

Trembling with excitement and annoyance, and while tears started to her eyes, she replied:

"Explain, sir! Why should I be called upon to explain? You know well that since I was seventeen I have been engaged—have loved another."

"At seventeen, interesting age, a girl is in the first flush of womanhood," began Hawkshaw, in his sneering tone; "fresh in feeling and tender in sensibility; the consequence is that, of a necessity, she falls in love with the first fellow, be he good, bad, or indifferent, who presents himself."

"But I did not fall in love, as you phrase it, with the first who presented himself, any more than I am likely to do with the *last*," replied Ethel, with an air that now was one of unconcealed annoyance. My sister Rose is a girl whom all allow to be charming, and is as much admired as any in the county, and she has passed seventeen, your rubicon, your girlish equator, your ideal line, without 'falling in love' with anyone——"

"That you know of, Miss Basset," said Hawkshaw, sharply.

"Rose has no secrets from me, sir!"

"Do not let us quarrel, for Heaven's sake. I apologise."

"How tiresome—how impertinent! and yet I dare not tell Morley," sighed Ethel, in her heart, as she continued to walk very fast; but Laurel Lodge was

a long way off, and the sunlit waste of the chase stretched for, at least, a mile before them yet.

Bitterly did she now repent having entrusted Morley with the ring, as it might lead to some unseemly quarrel between him and Hawkshaw; on this occasion she had an admirable opportunity for returning it personally. After a pause:

"With all this fancied attachment to your first love, I do not think you very romantic, Ethel," said Hawkshaw.

"You are right, sir; indeed, I am quite matter-of-fact."

"*Caramba!* it is too bad for a charming girl of two-and-twenty to be so."

"What right have you to deem me charming, or to assume my age?" asked Ethel, angrily, and with her eyes now full of tears, which the short veil of her little hat concealed.

"I can no more help deeming you so than help admiring the sunshine. But, ah, Ethel, if I had you where I have been—where the volcanic mountains of the Sierra Nevada look down on the valley of the Colorado, I could teach you, or perhaps infuse into your impulsive nature something of the fire, the romance—the glorious romance—of Spanish South America."

"Thank you," replied Ethel, relieved and laughing, when she found Hawkshaw was indulging in

one of his platitudes; "but I would rather learn it here, amid a sweet English landscape, like this old wooded chase, than among flaming volcanoes, tawny savages, stinging mosquitoes, and your old friends, the Barradas."

"The Barradas!" repeated Hawkshaw, starting, as his eyes flashed with a gleam of malevolence and alarm; his brows knit, his hands twitched spasmodically, and he gave Ethel a keen glance of inquiry; for she had unwittingly touched some hidden spring, some secret sore—or it might be sorrow. For a moment he looked as if he could have sprang upon her; but he laughed, and said, with an evident effort at being jocular: "To return to the subject—to this love of thrilling, blushing, and susceptible seventeen, which deprives me of you, occurred five years ago?"

"And since then I have found no reason to change my mind. Here is the gate of Miss Page's house, where I wish to call. Good evening, captain. Her brother Jack will see me home."

Ethel bowed, left him, and closed the iron gate.

She was, in reality, full of intense anxiety to learn what tidings Morley had received by the telegraph from London; but being bored and worried by Hawkshaw's cool and impudent love-making, she took this opportunity of quitting him, which,

in her nervous haste, she did, perhaps, rather too abruptly.

A shower of tears relieved her; but Hawkshaw, as he watched her figure flitting up the Pages' avenue of lilacs, balsam, poplars, and giant hollyhocks, bit his nether lip till the blood nearly came, and his sinister eyes emitted one of their most malevolent gleams.

"Curse her!" he muttered, hoarsely and deeply, "curse her! She spoke of the Barradas, too! But I shall crush her proud heart yet—crush it like a rotten *castano!*"

Then he turned away towards the seashore, with vengeance burning in his heart, and had not proceeded a quarter of a mile before he encountered Morley Ashton, perhaps the last person in the world he could have wished to meet at such a time, and when in such a bitter mood.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORLEY AND HAWKSHAW.

A FIERCE and panther-like spirit swelled up in the breast of Hawkshaw on seeing his fortunate rival approach. He felt a strong desire to strangle him, and thus, by one determined stroke, remove him from his path, and gain revenge on Ethel too !

He had more than once conceived the idea, in his wilder and more bitter moods, of giving Morley a *quietus* of strychnine, or putting a loaded revolver in his hand, so that it might go off conveniently, and, to all appearance, unawares ; but coroners' inquests often brought unpleasant things to light, and Morley was completely master of that ticklish fire-arm, the "six-shooter," as well as himself, and our Texan captain was far too politic to risk his valuable neck, in committing an open outrage on the queen's highway in England, whatever he may have done in his well-beloved Mexico, among the wild inhabitants of which he had learned the art—no small one certainly—of veiling alike every pur-

pose, love, hate, or fear, under a bland and smiling exterior, when it suited his purpose to do so.

The man he hated most on earth was Morley Ashton, yet he walked up to him frankly, with a smile in his deep eyes, and on his cruel lip (though his moustache concealed that), his right hand extended, and a cigar-case in his left——

"A lovely evening, Ashton," said he. "Had a pleasant walk? Have a weed—eh? Try a cigar?"

"Thank you—I don't smoke cubas."

"Do you prefer a regalia?"

"Thank you, I have some here."

"*Caramba!* I have smoked them two feet long ere this."

"In Texas?"

"Yes."

"I thought so," replied Morley, laughing. He was in excellent spirits. A telegram to Acton-Rennel had announced that his cabin passage to the Isle of France had been secured on board the *Hermione*, immediately on receipt of his mandate, and added, that a letter, duly announcing the circumstance, had been posted for Laurel Lodge.

"I never received it, Hawkshaw—odd, isn't it?" said Morley; "but it matters nothing now."

Hawkshaw gave a bitter smile unnoticed. No wonder that Morley had never received it, as his

quondam friend had found the letter referred to, in Mr. Basset's post-bag, which hung in the hall, and, after making himself master of the contents, had quietly put it in the fire, thinking by delay to create confusion, and, perhaps, stultify Morley's intentions altogether.

In his joy, honest, good-hearted Morley felt blandly disposed even to Hawkshaw, of whom he had such a constitutional mistrust. He had now an excellent opportunity for returning the ring, with which Ethel (whom Hawkshaw, incidentally, assured him was from home) had so unwisely entrusted to him; but in the height of his own satisfaction, he felt loth to mortify his luckless rival, and so delayed the matter for a time, while, smoking their cigars, they walked together slowly, side by side, up the hill, towards the rocks that overhung the sea, and border on the Vale of Acton.

"And so, old boy," said Morley to the silent and brooding Hawkshaw, "I am to go with our dear friends, the Bassets, after all."

"And what follows?"

"Of course, I shall have to look about me for some employment the moment we land, because I would rather die than be dependent on any man; but when I have the new judge's influence to second my exertions, something suitable and jolly will be sure to turn up."

"Ah—yes," accorded the other, smoking vigorously.

"Then, I shall have all the joy of the voyage with —(Ethel, he had almost said)—with my old friends the voyage through those very waters I so recently traversed on my half-hopeless homeward journey—a most miserable dog in my own estimation.

Morley, who, in the exuberance of his joy, began to whistle "A Life on the Ocean Wave," seemed to commune with himself rather than Hawkshaw, whose sinister visage at this moment presented somewhat of a picture as he listened.

"Like you, friend Ashton," said he, "I have failed to climb

"'The steep ascent where Fortune frowns afar.'

But I have learnt to fling a bowie-knife, point foremost, with deadly effect, and to handle a six-shooter ditto, damme—yes, and that is something."

Had Morley looked at Hawkshaw as he spoke, he would have seen a fierce glitter in his usually cunning eyes, betokening mischief.

"Well," he resumed, "any place is better than this conventional England. One of the greatest annoyances to me is the state of society in it; so you are wise to squat elsewhere."

"Indeed! How?" asked Morley, watching his cigar smoke as it curled away in the breeze that

came from the sea, whose breakers they could now hear bursting on the rocks.

"Because that state compels us, as if we wore a vizard—a mask—to conceal our suspicions, our loves, and our hatreds—yes, Mr. Ashton, still more especially our *hatreds*—under a sauve and cold-blooded exterior."

"The result of good breeding, I presume?"

"The result of cursed conventionality, I call it. The stronger the hate, too often, the brighter and softer is the smile that conceals it. *Maladette!* 'Tis not so in some of the sunny lands where I have been, and where a little homicide, now and then, is considered but a casual occurrence."

The captain was in what Morley and Mr. Basset were wont to term one of his "bitter and bouncing moods"—moods which rather amused them; so as this was scarcely a moment in which to proffer the ring, Morley lit another cigar, and to put off the time until he could meet Ethel, strolled on till they reached the summit of the cliffs, from whence could be seen the far extent of the dark blue sea, that stretched away to the south-west, with the sails that dotted it, shining red, rather than white, in the ruddy light of the setting sun. There, too, was visible the smoke of more than one steamer, rolling far astern, like a long and fading pennant on the sky.

So the rivals continued to ramble on in no very companionable mood, for Morley was happy and abstracted, while Hawkshaw was bitter and quarrelsome, till the deep hoarse booming of the breakers announced that they were close to Acton Chine, towards which, as if by silent and tacit consent, they proceeded.

The evening was lovely, and its calm beauty increased as the sun set and twilight stole on.

With the shrill practical whistle of an occasional locomotive on the London and North-Western line, there came on the breath of the soft west wind the more poetical tinkling of the waggon-bells from the dusty highway, in the green vale far down below; and now, though the placid air rang joyously, the evening chime from the broad, low Norman spire of Acton church, the solid outline of which stood defined and dark against the flush of the saffron sky beyond.

And with the breeze that wafted the sound came the fragrant perfume of the ripening fields, their warmth and fertility, as if it had stolen "o'er a bed of violets." Sunk in deepening shadow now, green Acton Chase, with all its great oaks blending in a mass, stretched far away in the distance to the foot of the uplands.

Acton Chine—the reader may perhaps have seen it—is a seam or chasm in the rocks, rising to the

height of four hundred feet or more, sheer from the sea, whose waves for ever roar, toil, and boil in snow-white foam against its base.

Standing where Morley and Hawkshaw did, on the evening in question, one might say with Edgar, but perhaps more truly than he did of Dover:

> "How fearful
> And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
> The crows and choughs, that wing the midway air,
> Show scarce so large as beetles * * *
> The murmuring surge,
> That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,
> Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
> Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
> Topple down headlong."

There, too, as at Dover, on the dark face of those rocks, the fine green tufts of the samphire grow. The waves outside the chine are white as snow with foam and fury, while within the water is calm, deep, and dark as those of a far-sunk well.

Above, around, and below, the sea-birds wheel and scream, for the clefts and crannies of the rocks are full of their nests. And here, in explanation, we may add that chine is an old Anglo-Norman word, derived from *echine*—a gash or rent; and these chasms are so named in some parts of England, particularly about the Isle of Wight, where we find Compton Chine, Brook Chine, and the Black Gang Chine.

Morley peeped over into the awful profundity

below, and then shrank back instinctively, with an emotion of inexpressible alarm and awe—it seemed so vast, so terrible!

Retiring, he seated himself on the verge of the giddy cliff and removed his hat, that the sea-breeze might play on his hot and flushed forehead. Cool and grateful, it refreshed, soothed, and calmed him.

Impressed by the beauty of the scene and of the evening, a calm joy pervaded Morley's heart, and he prayed a voiceless prayer to God to strengthen him for his destiny.

What put prayer into his head at such a time?

The scene was grandly terrible on one side, and softly serene on the other; but Morley was familiar with both.

Was it present happiness, or a solemn foreboding of future woe, that filled his soul with pious thoughts?

Morley himself could not tell. He thought of the future; and none can foresee what is in the womb of Time.

To be separated from Ethel—ah! there was no chance of that now; but Hawkshaw—the cunning and hateful Cramply Hawkshaw—for some brief space would hover about her still!

What of that? The broad waters of the mighty sea on which he looked, and whose breakers boiled against the rocks four hundred feet below him—the

sea from which a red moon, round and vast as a chariot-wheel, was rising—would be around him and Ethel, and this man Hawkshaw would be left behind.

While these thoughts occurred to Morley, he opened his portemonnaie, and drew forth the ring he had promised to return.

At that moment Hawkshaw, who was seated behind him, crept near, with a visage pale, damp, and distorted by malevolence, and with a fiendish glare in his eye.

* * * * *

About an hour after this, the captain was seen leisurely proceeding along the road to Laurel Lodge.

He was alone!

CHAPTER IX.

ALARM.

Darkness had set in, and candles had been lighted for an hour nearly, when Hawkshaw entered the now half dismantled drawing-room of Laurel Lodge.

Rose was idling over the piano; Ethel was seated near the unremoved tea equipage, and Mr. Basset was busy among some papers in his escritoire. Hawkshaw, for reasons of his own, dared not encounter the pale, inquiring face of Ethel.

"Have you seen anything of Mr. Ashton?" asked her father, looking up, with one glance at Hawkshaw, and another at the clock on the mantelpiece. "It is past nine. He was only going to the railway station, and has not yet returned. His absence is most singular."

Hawkshaw hesitated, and looked at his watch with a confused air, as he muttered:

"Past nine—yes, ten minutes."

"He was seen to pass the gate with you," said Ethel.

"With me?" said Hawkshaw, starting.

"Yes."

"By whom?" he asked, with some asperity.

"Nance Folgate," said Rose.

"Ah—true, yes—we took a turn together; and when I saw him last he was going towards the chine."

"The chine!" exclaimed the girls together, in a tone of surprise that was not unmingled with alarm.

"The chine, at this hour!" repeated Mr. Basset.

"It was eight then; and he said he intended to enjoy a quiet weed along the cliffs."

"Most strange!" said Ethel, "when he had news of importance to communicate to me."

"He cannot be long now. I returned without him, as I felt odd—giddy; the regalias I sometimes smoke here don't agree with me. I used to get such prime ones in Mexico."

"You look pale—absolutely ill," said Mr. Basset; "have some wine. What is the matter?"

"Thanks," replied Hawkshaw, almost tottering into a chair, and tossing his red cap aside.

"The last bottle of our Cliquot is on the sideboard."

The cork was soon cut, and Hawkshaw nearly filled a crystal rummer with the foaming champagne, of which he drank thirstily. As he did so, his hand trembled, and the vessel was heard to rattle against his teeth.

Whence this unusual emotion, which did not escape the anxious eyes of Ethel.

"Oh, Heaven!" thought she in her heart, "if he should have quarrelled with Morley! His manner is so excited, so strange, something unpleasant—terrible—must have happened."

Time passed slowly.

Half-past nine struck, then ten, but there was no appearance of Morley. Ethel watched at the windows which opened to the lawn; she listened and lingered at the front door. Then Rose and she ventured to the foot of the avenue, now lighted by a clear, cold moon, and gazed down the long green lane, in which she had first met him on his return; but all was still, not a footfall was heard, nor aught but the dew dropping from the leaves.

Far into the darkness and silence stretched the vista of that long and shady lane, so famed for its wild roses in summer, its filberts and black bramble-berries in autumn, its scarlet hips and haws in frosty winter—a real old English lane.

A sound breaks the impressive silence—it is the distant clock of the village church striking the hour of eleven.

Anon twelve struck, and no Morley came.

Ethel wept aloud. Mr. Basset now became seriously alarmed, and knowing how dangerous was the chine, and indeed, how much so were all the cliffs

along the adjacent coast, he closely questioned Hawkshaw (who had now become more composed) as to when, where, and how he had last seen Morley, and his story never varied—that they had separated at the pathway which ascended upwards from the old London road to Acton Chine; that Ashton was in high spirits, having had a most satisfactory telegram from town, and that the speaker, when looking back, had last seen the outline of his figure between the earth and the sky on the summit of the rocks above the chine.

"He must have fallen and hurt himself—broken a bone, perhaps," suggested Mr. Basset, rising, and proposing to start.

"Oh, for mercy's sake—papa! papa!" began Ethel.

"Let us go forth to search—I am at your service!" said Hawkshaw.

"Nance Folgate, summon the gardener; let us get lanterns—a rope, a pole or two, so as to be ready for any emergency."

Pale, trembling, faint, and in tears with apprehension and vague fears of some impending disaster, Ethel would have accompanied them, but for the opposition made by her father and Hawkshaw; and with sickening anxiety, she saw them depart, knowing that some hours must necessarily elapse before they could bring intelligence that might relieve her agony or crush her heart for ever.

Muffled in cloaks and shawls, she and Rose, with old Nance Folgate, lingered at the end of the avenue, so long as the lantern lights were visible; and hour after hour, till dawn was drawing near, did they wait, trembling with every respiration, and listening in an agony of expectation to every sound, till the shades of night began to pass away.

When Mr. Basset, Hawkshaw, and the gardener set out, a little after twelve, the night had become dark—unusually so for the season—cloudy and windy.

They traversed the road leading to that portion of the cliffs on which Hawkshaw averred he had last seen Morley Ashton lingering in the twilight.

Hallooing from time to time, as they continued to ascend the pathway to the shore, they pushed on rapidly, yet pausing ever and anon to listen; but there came no response on the gusts of wind that occasionally swept past them.

The clock of Acton church in the valley below struck the hour of two, when they reached the summit of the cliffs, when weird and wild was the scene around them. Masses of cloud, like dark floating palls, were hurrying across the heavens; the stars between them shone out clear and brightly; the ocean, that stretched in distance far away, and blended with the sky, was flecked with foam, for there was a gale coming on from the seaward, and the boom of the hurrying waves as they rolled in

white surf against the rock-bound coast, and mingled their roar with the bellowing wind in that deep and awful chasm, *the chine*, was terrifically grand and impressive, especially at such an hour.

Disturbed by the lantern-lights, and the voices of the three searchers, the wild sea-birds screamed and wheeled about in flocks.

The soft close turf grew to the very verge of the shore and wall-like cliff, and as the searchers proceeded along the giddy summit, seeking for traces of feet and hallooing from time to time, the utmost caution was necessary for their own safety.

Gradually they drew near the chine.

"Hallo—what is this?" exclaimed Mr. Basset, as he trod on something; "a hat—and near it, a kid glove."

They picked them up, and recognised Morley's light grey "wide-awake," and a glove supposed to be his, all uncertainty about the first-mentioned article being ended, by their perceiving his name written on the lining thereof.

Proceeding with greater care, a little farther on they found his cigar-case, and a few feet below, near the edge of the cliff, the ends of two half-used cigars.

"I told you he was enjoying a quiet weed," said Hawkshaw.

Mr. Basset and the gardener made no reply; but

with eyes and lanterns close to the ground, were breathlessly examining several footmarks impressed in the soft gravelly soil and sea grass about the mouth of the chine.

"For Heaven's sake, take care, sir," exclaimed the gardener, whom the scene, the place, the hour, and the awful booming of the black sea in the profundity four hundred feet below, appalled. "But look here, sir," he added almost immediately; "oh, sir, look here!"

Two deep ruts in the gravel, as if formed by a man's foot slipping downwards, and two places from which the grass had been recently torn away by hands that had clutched them evidently in despair, showed but too plainly and too terribly that some one had fallen over there.

"Look here, captain—look here!" continued the excited gardener.

Hawkshaw was pale as death, and he drew back with an irrepressible shudder.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, "poor Ethel!—he has fallen over here, and must have perished—most miserably perished!"

"Nothing could save him, sir," said the gardener, in a low voice, "he would be drowned, if he was not dead before he reached the water."

After lingering hopelessly for a time, as if loth to accept the fact of such a sudden calamity, they

began to descend from the chine, and slowly and sorrowfully retraced their steps to Laurel Lodge, to increase by their story the alarm, dismay, and grief, which already reigned there.

* * * * *

In vain were descriptions of Morley Ashton's person and dress circulated in the local papers, in vain were they distributed among the rural police, fishermen, and coastguard, by Mr. Basset, during the few days that remained before he left England.

In vain were telegrams dispatched along the coast, north and south (at Mr. Basset's expense), by Hawkshaw, who made himself most singularly and kindly active; no trace could be found of the missing one; and after three days had elapsed, there remained not a shadow of a doubt that he had been drowned by falling or being thrown over the cliff of the chine. The London detectives who examined the spot were suspicious enough to aver the latter, from the traces they found, and, in their opinion, Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw, the latter most unwillingly, ultimately found themselves compelled to concur.

CHAPTER X.

POOR ETHEL.

The day that followed the return of Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw from the perilous exploration of Acton Chine was one of dreadful suffering for poor Ethel.

Kind old Nance Folgate had forced the girls to retire to bed as dawn was breaking; but no sleep closed the eyes of Ethel Basset.

Morning came—a bright May morning—and still no word of Morley; for she could not realise as yet the idea, the dread conviction, of his death—that he had indeed perished so miserably.

Oh! was this the world of yesterday?

Her sister, Rose, weary with watching overnight, was now asleep. Happy Rose, who could gain oblivion in slumber. Ethel quitted her restless bed, opened the window, and looked forth into the sunny morning.

There was still the garden, with its trees and flowers, the first rays of the sun shining through the conservatory, a distant glimpse of the village church through a long vista of oaks, and the blue sea

beyond. There, in the distance, she could trace the road that wound over the uplands towards that fatal Chine—the road he must have pursued but yesterday. There also—but tears, hot and blinding, welled up in her eyes, and she nestled again beside her sleeping and unconscious sister.

"Gone! Morley gone — Morley dead — Morley drowned!"

These words seemed ever on her lips, written in the air before her, to be whispered in her ears and in her heart, while fancy drew an agonising picture of his fall from that dreadful cliff into the yawning profundity below, where he would be tossed and dashed upon the rocks, till his poor, uncoffined remains were chafed to pieces by the waves.

As the lagging day drew on, she did not quit her bed; but, after a time, total prostration of mind and body enabled her to sleep soundly and deeply, with her aching head pillowed on the bosom of Rose; while her father, with Hawkshaw and others, pursued a hopeless and fruitless search for the missing man.

This slumber lasted little more than an hour, and waking brought her back to misery—a misery that flashed upon her vividly, keenly, and suddenly, calling all her half dormant faculties into instant life and action.

It was indeed coming back to agony.

Vainly did Rose speak to her of hope, that it might not have been he whom Hawkshaw had watched proceeding towards the Chine, and that the half-smoked cigars might not have been his.

"But the hat, with his name written in it, and the glove—his glove, Rose; see where I sewed it for him yesterday—only yesterday!" she would exclaim, while pressing it to her lips as she sat up in bed, with her dark hair all dishevelled about her white and polished shoulders, pale, worn, and crushed by an anguish there was no alleviating—for the loss of the poor dear heart, who had loved her so truly and so tenderly.

When re-examined by day, the verge of the Chine, by the abrasion of the soil, bore conclusive evidence that a short struggle had taken place, and that some one had fallen or been pushed over there. A few drops of blood were detected on the stones; but of this circumstance Ethel was not informed.

"Eat something, Miss Ethel—a bit of cake; take a little tea, a glass of wine, or anything; you must, darling, you must!" said old Nance Folgate, pillowing her favourite's head on her breast, towards the close of this most dreadful day.

Ethel silently declined, for the smallest crumb would have choked her; but grief is thirsty, so she drank the wine and water with gratitude, or rather

permitted Rose to pour it between her pale and passive lips.

Then a shower of tears followed, and she moaned and sobbed aloud, and heavily. Another night followed, another day dawned; but no hope dawned with it, and no tidings came.

The first shock over, there settled on the mind and soul of Ethel a deep and settled grief. She ceased to weep, save when alone. For a time she was reckless of the future, or viewed it with sullen indifference or composure, none knew which. She cared not how soon they quitted Laurel Lodge now, nor how soon she saw the shores of England fade from view, though she thought, with a shudder, of the ocean which she knew must have entombed the corpse of him she loved so long and well.

And Cramply Hawkshaw—how did he comport himself during this painful crisis? Quietly, earnestly, full of apparent solicitude, ready in suggestion and active in inquiry. He remained mostly with Rose; but when Ethel appeared on the evening of the second day in the dining-room, he was ready, with hand and arm, to attend her politely, and silently.

She entered Morley's bed-room, now empty of its tenant. She flung herself upon the couch in an agony of grief, for the place seemed full of his pre-

sence, and his beloved form appeared to rise up embodied before her.

There were his travelling bag; his telescope and flask, his hair-brushes, a stray glove or so, and a miniature of herself, which had been the poor fellow's only solace when far away from her in Africa. There were other mementoes of the beloved one she would never see more; he whose poor remains, if they were not lying at the foot of that dreadful Chine, were being, perhaps, swept away to sea—that sea which, at times, she hoped she might not live to traverse.

Here prostrate on the couch she was found by Rose and Nance Folgate, who conveyed her out, and locked the door.

This event, by the confusion and anxiety it created, delayed the departure of the Bassets from Laurel Lodge for a week longer.

There were times when Ethel wished that she might die, though she shrank from the idea of being separated from her father and sister, and from not sharing their perilous journey; but her mother's grave under the close-clipped grass looked so calm and peaceful in the sunshine of the old English churchyard, that she almost longed to be laid by her side. However, as some one says, "Grief rivets the chain of our life instead of breaking it." So Ethel did not die; but she fell into a state of

languid apathy, which caused her father and sister the most serious apprehension.

There were other times, when dreadful thoughts occurred to Ethel—thoughts that came to her mind unbidden, and that she dared express to none; but she could not help associating the mysterious and terrible calamity which had befallen Morley with the idea of Hawkshaw, his rival.

She remembered the unusual and unnatural pallor of his cheek, and his strange excitement on the eventful night; how he complained of illness; how thirstily he drank of the champagne; and how his hand shook so that the crystal which contained the wine rattled nervously against his teeth.

The thought of his story of the Barranco Secco; of his having too surely associated in California, and elsewhere, with such men as Pedro and Zuares Barraddas; and she remembered many episodes of his Mexican life, which he had incidentally related, and at which, though she and Rose had been wont to laugh at them, she shuddered now, and knew not why!

She perceived, too, that Hawkshaw wore his own ring once more, so Morley Ashton must have formally returned it to him on that fatal evening.

Prior to Morley's final arrangement to accompany them, Ethel had schooled her little heart to bear the separation, consequent on their anticipated sea

voyage, and change of home, contemplating it as a sorrow that might have a happy end when brighter fortune smiled upon them all; but now she had lost him by a separation that would endure while life lasted.

The slight tinge of colour which her delicate cheek usually wore faded completely away. Her eyes lost their brilliant and calm expression, her lips their wonted smile, her spirits all their buoyancy.

Mr. Basset, we have said, saw this with alarm, and by every means in his power hastened to break up his household, and leave Acton-Rennel.

His daughter's thoughts were with the dead; but still the living, and the duties of life, claimed her care. One cannot live in the world and not be of it; thus, one of her last days spent at pleasant Laurel Lodge was occupied in paying farewell visits —supported between Rose and Hawkshaw—to her old pensioners and dependents in the thatched cottages among those lovely green lanes, that ere long were to know her footsteps no more, and these old people mingled their blessings with tearful hopes of her happiness and long life, in the new home to which she was about to depart.

On the tenth day after Morley's disappearance she found herself, with her father, Rose, Hawkshaw, and old Nurse Folgate, seated in a first-class

carriage, speeding along the London and North-Western line towards the metropolis.

Laurel Lodge had long since vanished, with its whole locality.

Steeped in summer haze, the landscape flew past like the wind; but Ethel was listless. To her it seemed that the purpose of life, the joy of existence, the romance of love, and the charm of youth, had all gone for ever.

Hawkshaw was seated opposite to her. She lowered her veil to conceal her face; he held the last number of *Punch* well up to conceal his.

As Morley had disappeared thus, and beyond all trace, and as his berth was secured in their ship, the *Hermione*, which was to sail for the Isle of France, as soon as her cargo was all hoisted in, Hawkshaw availed himself of the circumstance to go in his place; by which means this most enterprising Texan officer secured his passage free.

CHAPTER XI.

DARKNESS MADE LIGHT.

We last left Morley Ashton and Hawkshaw seated near the verge of Acton Chine.

The former was extracting from his portemonnaie the ring which Ethel Basset had so unwisely commissioned him to return, and he remained with it in his hand for a minute or two, forming in his own mind the least offensive mode of tendering it. At that time the chimes of the church of Acton-Rennel rung out joyously their closing peal, and the sound, together with the beauty of the evening, the softness of the wooded landscape on one hand, and the wild grandeur of the surf-beaten rocks on the other, were not without a most soothing influence on the somewhat poetic and imaginative temperament of Morley, who reflected on the shortness of the time he would be permitted to look on that familiar scene, and the changes that must take place ere—if ever—he saw it again.

He said something of this kind to Hawkshaw,

who was alternately silent or nervously garrulous, adding, with a sad smile—

"I never hear the chimes of old Acton, ringing over the woodlands, without thinking of the lines—

> "'Those evening bells, those evening bells,
> How many a tale their music tells,
> Of youth, of home, and native clime,
> When last I heard their soothing chime.'

And then the scenery here about is so glorious, and so thoroughly English in its character and fertility!"

"Bah! you don't call this scenery, do you?" asked Hawkshaw, brusquely.

"Is it not charming?"

"May be so to you; but to me, who have hunted, scouted, and trapped over the mighty Sierras, which divide Texas from New Mexico—Sierras covered to their cloud-clapped summits with forests of oak, pine, and cedar, and all alive with wild horses and cattle; or to me, who have seen the yet denser woods out of which the Arkansas and Trinidad rivers come roaring to the sea, your mild, Dutch-looking, English landscape, is no more than a rat-ranche would be if compared to St. Paul's Cathedral?"

"It must be somewhat dangerous, a land teeming with wild horses and cattle?" said Morley, to change the subject, and smiling, as he lit a fresh cigar.

"Dangerous? *Caramba!* I rather calculate it is!"

"How?" asked Morley, carelessly.

"In those mountain ranges are wild trappers, and lawless bandidos, like those Barradas I told you of one evening—do you remember?"

"Perfectly."

"Fellows of all colours—white, black, and brown, yellow, and copper-coloured—who may be off with your purse and scalp before you know where you are. Then there are bears, conguars, buffaloes, panthers, wolves, foxes, and alligators. I was nearly gobbled up by one when bathing in the Red River. Immortal smash! I had a close run for it, and only kept him off by splashing and kicking like a sunfish in a breeze."

After a pause—

"I wish we had the ladies here," said Morley; "the evening is so lovely—the sunset is so rich."

"Aye—our Ethel is romantic, very!" observed Hawkshaw; "she rather likes 'Thaddeus of Warsaw,' and copies verses in a hot-pressed album; sighs often when alone, no doubt, and always ties the ribbons of her bonnet in a true-lover's knot."

Morley looked fixedly at the speaker, for the whole speech, and the phrase, "our Ethel," displeased him.

"Mr. Hawkshaw," said he, gravely, "there is

something of a sneer in your tone, which I do not understand."

"Sneer—not at all. Do you imagine that I would sneer at one so charming as our friend, Miss Basset—one whom we mutually admire so much?" replied Hawkshaw; but as he spoke the fire of secret hate mingled in his eye with that of the admiration, we cannot term it love, he bore for Ethel.

"Apropos of Miss Basset," said Morley, now careless whether he offended or not, "I have here a ring of yours, Captain Hawkshaw, which she commissioned me to return to you, as, on reflection, she cannot think of depriving you of so interesting a relic of your Mexican campaigns."

"Thank you," replied Hawkshaw, with a quiet stare, as he took the ring from Morley, and placed it on one of his fingers, even his bushy moustache failing to conceal the fierce quiver of his upper lip; "I received it at a ball, from the eldest daughter of General Santa Anna, and so can well afford to receive it back from a daughter of old Scriven Basset."

This was the third or fourth history of the ring Morley had heard; but he only smiled in silence.

"You think you have done your duty," resumed the captain, as the resolution to quarrel became strong in his breast, so strong that he cared not to

repress it; "but I reckon, friend Ashton, that you are slightly up a tree, as the Yankees say."

"Sir, I do not understand you," said Morley.

"I am not so vernal as to fail in perceiving that you are awfully spooney upon Miss Basset."

"If I am to construe your slang into meaning that I love her, you are quite right," replied Morley, coldly, as he rose up.

"But you cannot think of marrying her, even if old Basset be donkey enough to let you!"

"Captain Hawkshaw!"

"For one who can scarcely float himself, it is thankless work to take a sinking craft in tow," continued the captain, whose phrases were quite as often nautical as Mexican.

"Sir, you are impertinent."

"*Caramba!* not at all—but truthful—only truthful," replied Hawkshaw, with a studied insolence of manner, as he continued to knock the ashes off his cigar, so that they flew all over Morley's face. "If I had you in Mexico, I would give you advice more seriously; as it is, in this tame, stupid land of good order, coroners' inquests, rural police, and city blue-bottles, I must content myself with what I have said."

"Stand back, sir, and permit me to pass you!" said Morley, haughtily, as he found that, on rising, he was unpleasantly near the verge of the rocks,

and that Hawkshaw, with a dark and dangerous gleam in his eyes, stood menacingly between him and the safer portion of the edge.

It was at that moment, that unexpectedly as a star falls, or light flashes, a diabolical idea occurred to Hawkshaw, just as if a fiend, unseen, was at his ear to whisper and to urge him on.

A sudden silence seemed to fill the air—to pervade the land and sea. He ceased to hear the roar of the waves in the Chine below, or the screaming of the wild sea-birds in mid air. A clamorous ferocity—a terrible anxiety, seemed to possess his whole soul.

He cast a hasty glance around him ; not a person was near, and no eye was upon them, save One in heaven, and that dread eye he forgot. He gave the unsuspecting Morley a dreadful blow with his clenched hand, and then a violent push. The victim staggered backward, reeled forward, and as he fell, clutched wildly at the turf which fringed the edge of the rocks.

"Oh, Heaven!" burst from his lips ; "Hawkshaw —you cannot—you dare not mean this! Save me—Ethel!"

The pieces of turf he clutched so desperately gave way, and without a sound he vanished into the awful profundity below!

Hawkshaw lingered a moment by the fatal spot, for in that moment all his senses were paralysed.

His breath, his sight, and hearing were gone, and he felt as one who had ceased to live.

Then he glanced carefully, fearfully, and stealthily around, to assure himself again that the dreadful deed he had committed was unseen by mortal eyes, and anon, turning, he proceeded rapidly to descend the winding pathway from the Chine, and then sought the road to Laurel Lodge.

The minutes spent in descending seemed to be so many hours. His feet felt as if glued to the dusty path, and his knees trembled under him. Before he reached the highway the fierce fever of his blood had cooled, though his heart still beat wildly, and his temples throbbed painfully.

There was a revulsion of feeling now, and he began to wish the cruel deed undone. It was an act so tremendous, so fearful to be perpetrated among civilised people, that it appalled him more than he could have expected, though he had witnessed, yes, and acted in many a deed of cruelty and bloodshed, in climes where the law, unless it were Lynch law, was unknown even in name.

The sun had set, and the sombre shadows of evening were deepening on the land and sea.

Hawkshaw walked hurriedly, taking a great circuit, that the perturbation of his spirits might subside a little before he presented himself at Laurel Lodge; but the throbbing of his temples, and the

leaping of his heart, continued the same as he hastened on; and now, as the twilight deepened, the trees and shadows began to take strange and threatening forms, and ever before him he seemed to see the last despairing glance of Morley's eyes, and in his ears to hear the rending of the turf as it gave way, with the awful sound of the poor victim's voice, as with the terror of a dreadful death in his soul, he so vainly sought the pitiless destroyer to save him.

In the cool flow of a wayside runnel, he bathed his trembling hands and flushed forehead. Then he began to consider that, as no one had seen him commit the act, he need scarcely wish it undone; that he should dismiss the palsying fear that was gnawing at his heart, for in time he would strive to forget, as he had forgotten and lived down many a thing before.

He had removed a troublesome rival from his path, and fearfully had he punished Ethel for her rejection of his addresses but two hours or so before, it now seemed years ago, and for her open preference of the hapless Morley Ashton; and yet—and yet the emotions of that man's soul were what no pen can depict.

The summer moon that rose so broad and redly from the distant sea now showed her clear, bright, silver disc above the rocks of Acton Chine, but

Hawkshaw dared not look upon her lest he might see murder on her face, as slowly, with parched lips, pallid cheeks, and trembling hands, he left the long, green lane, and proceeded up the avenue that led to Laurel Lodge.

CHAPTER XII.

ON BOARD THE GOOD SHIP "HERMIONE," OF LONDON.

Amid the glare, the roar, and bustle of the mighty world of London, ten days passed away like a painful dream, an unrealisable phantasmagoria, to Ethel, and like a dream, too, appeared the embarkation at the crowded docks (which seemed crammed with all the vessels in the world) one board the *Hermione*, a fine clipper ship of 500 tons register, which, with all her canvas loose, and blue peter flying at the fore, was towed down the crowded river by a puffing, panting, noisy little paddle-tug, which rejoiced in the name of *Garibaldi*.

Blackwall, with its docks; noble Greenwich, with its terraces and domes; Woolwich, where, now and then, a drum beat sharply, or a cannon boomed through the air, were speedily passed; vast fleets of merchantmen, crowded river steamers, and lumbering barges, sidling down with the tide were glided between; each bend of Father Thames was traversed, and soon the *Hermione* was off Gravesend so busy as a watering-place, and ever alive with

whistling trains and smoking steamers, in its noise, bustle, and gaiety contrasting with sombre Tilbury, on the flat Essex shore, with its brick-faced bastions, double-ditch, and moat—an old cannon or two lying among the sea slime, and a solitary sentinel pacing to and fro before King Charles's Gate.

At Gravesend, where the *Hermione* lay for a time, with blue peter still flying, and her foretopsail loose, as a double signal "for sea," she was joined by her captain, who came by the down train from town; the tug was paid off and a pilot taken on board, with the last of the sea-going stores.

Then sail was made on the ship, and the sunset of a fine May evening saw her past Sheerness, with its vast basin, docks, and storehouses, and the guard-ship at the Nore, which pealed her evening gun across the silent sea.

The wind was freshening as the eventful day went down.

Ethel and Rose, with old Nance Folgate, were all below now, sick and ill. Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw trod the lee side of the quarter-deck together. Both were silent. Mr. Basset was gazing sadly at the shore along which they were running, and anon at the red hulk of the floating light, which is anchored four miles north-eastward of Sheerness, and the lamps of which were now twinkling amid the haze and obscurity far astern.

Hawkshaw was full of thought, too. He felt a secret joy at being scatheless and free from England; though, when reflecting, he thought, in the words of Jane Eyre: "It is not violence that best overcomes hate, nor vengeance that most certainly heals an injury."

The *Hermione*, we have said, was a 500-ton ship. She was one of the finest of her class that ever left the slips at Blackwall, and this was only her third voyage; thus, in addition to being new, she was well found and well fitted up in every respect.

John Phillips, her captain, was a bluff, ruddy-visaged, jolly little man, with cheeks turned red by exposure to sun and sea-breeze. He had three mates; the senior, Mr. Samuel Quail, was a plain, honest, rough seaman, who expected next voyage to have a ship of his own; the second, Mr. Foster; but the third was Adrian Manfredi, an Italian, a quiet and rather gentlemanly young man, of whom we shall hear more anon.

The *Hermione* had a surgeon, Leslie Heriot, a Scotsman, of course, and F.R.C.S.E.; a boatswain, carpenter, blacksmith, and a crew of a somewhat mingled kind, as we shall have unfortunate cause to show ere long. She was bound for Singapore, but was to touch at the Isle of France on her way out.

Her cabin was handsome and spacious, and little

cabins, called state-rooms, opened off it with sliding doors.

Ethel, Rose, and Nance Folgate had one of them. Mr. Scriven Basset and Hawkshaw had the berth opposite. The others were occupied by the officers of the ship, and all bade fair to form a pleasant little community during the long voyage before them.

For two days the *Hermione* lay at anchor off Deal; on the third day she put to sea. By this time Ethel and Rose had nearly got what Captain Phillips bluntly termed "their sea-legs under them," and sat on the quarter-deck seats after breakfast, well muffled in cloaks; for though a lovely May sun was shining on the rippling sea, and all over the fertile coast of Kent, the atmosphere was chill, as the breeze swept over the watery Downs.

The day was charming, the wind was fair, and, with everything set upon her that would draw, even to her topgallant studding-sails rigged aloft, the *Hermione* flew before it.

The chalky cliffs of Kent; Dungeness lighthouse, with its miles of shingly headland; gay Brighton, with its far extent of sandy bay, that stretches from Beechy Head to Selsea Hill; the chalky ranges that look down on the wooded weald of Sussex—were soon passed, and ere long the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, gilded by the evening sun, rose on the starboard bow.

Rose Basset, about whom, attracted by her girlish beauty and *espièglerie*, the young Scotch surgeon and the Italian mate were both disposed to hover, asked questions from time to time—those silly, but, perhaps, natural questions which landfolks will ask on board ship, which, somehow, did not sound quite so silly when asked by the rosy lips of such a pretty girl as Rose—while poor Ethel remained seated in silence, with her eyes fixed on the distant coast, and wondering how far Laurel Lodge and Acton-Rennel were beyond those shadowy cliffs of chalk.

Her reflections or thoughts were all chaos—a mere mass of confusion. Thus, at times she could scarcely realise where she was, or how she came to be on board the *Hermione*, whether the journey by rail to London, her ten days' sojourn there, and her being at present on the sea, were not all a dream—a protracted nightmare, from which she would waken and find herself in her familiar bed-room in dear old Laurel Lodge, which her eyes were never more to see.

She thought, "How bright the evening sun may be shining on it now; how gaily down the long leafy vistas of Acton Chase, and on poor mamma's grave. How little could she have conceived that we should be so far from it? But the Lodge—ah, others inhabit it now; others look through the windows and pass through its rooms; others prome-

nade the gravelled walks and play croquet on its grassy lawn, or cull flowers in its conservatory. The place that knew us once, knows us no more; we shall never see it again; never tread its soil, or breathe its air; never more, never more!"

Her tears fell, tears that fell hot and fast.

"Oh, to be with Morley and at rest," she sighed in her heart. "But then there is papa, poor papa, who loves me so well, and Rose."

Her father's kind and benevolent face, sweet, ruddy Rose's happy smile, and the familiar visage of Hawkshaw (who had become exceeding gentle and attentive), were ever before her. But Laurel Lodge, with its home life, its elegance, and quiet details, with the face, voice, image, existence, and loss of Morley Ashton, seemed all to have passed away to a vast distance from her.

In a very few days she seemed to have lived a great many years in thought and suffering.

"Cheer up, Ethel—permit me to call you so," said Hawkshaw, who had been silently regarding her sweet, pensive face. "Cheer up," he repeated, in a low voice; "think of what is before us in the Mauritius—the lovely Isle of France—the land of Paul and Virginia, that amiable little Virginia, about whom every lady at least once in life sheds so many tears, especially when in her early teens. We must go over all the places depicted by Bernardin

St. Pierre in his novel; the Shaddock Grove, the Mount of Discovery, Cape Misfortune, and the Bay of the Tomb—eh?"

"In pity leave me to myself," said Ethel, on whose sensitive ear his half-jocular voice sounded gratingly.

"As you please," he muttered, under his breath, with impatience, as he went to leeward and lit a cigar.

Next evening Ethel wept again, as she saw the last of England—the lovely coast of Devon, with all its apple-bowers mellowing in the sun—fade into a blue streak, that blended with the evening sea.

Then, for the first time, sea and sky, cloud and water were around them, and she strove to rouse herself from the apathy that had been oppressing her faculties, and endeavoured, if she could not speak, at least to listen to the conversation of others.

"Our crew are indeed a mixed lot, Mr. Basset," she heard Captain Phillips say to her father; "mixed in character and in colour; more like a gang shipped in the Mersey than in London."

"How so, sir?" asked Mr. Basset.

"We have Yankees, West Indians, and Mexican Spaniards—some of these last are the worst of the lot."

"Been a good many years in Mexico, Captain Phillips," said Hawkshaw, assuming a jaunty air.

"Have you ?"

"Yes, and should like to see some of your fellows."

"They are quarrelsome, I presume," observed Mr. Basset.

"Very, and very apt to use their knives. Keep her away a point or two to the southward, Ellerton," said he to the man at the wheel. "Mr. Quail, desire the watch to bring those lee braces more aft."

"They should be restricted in the use of such weapons as sheath-knives, by law," said Mr. Basset, emphatically, and thinking, perhaps, of his judge's wig, which he had been recently trying on.

"So they should, sir, but the law seldom reaches far into blue water, unless so be as a Queen's pennant is floating over it. Do you see that fellow out upon the arm of the mainyard just now ?"

"Ah !—what is he perched up there for ?—amusement ?" asked Mr. Basset.

"He is busy securing the eye of the stun'sail boom."

"Well, captain ?"

"To my mind, he is the very model of a pirate."

They all looked up, and saw a large-boned, powerful, athletic, dark-skinned, and black-whiskered fellow, clad in a red shirt, and a pair of remarkably dirty canvas trousers, secured about his waist by a black belt, in which a long sheath-knife was stuck.

He was astride the yard-arm; the bronze-like

soles of his muscular bare feet were turned towards the group, and, as the captain said, he was doing something to the studding-sail boom.

"A foreigner, I presume, by the rings in his ears," said Mr. Basset, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his ample white waistcoat.

"A Mexican Spaniard," said Captain Phillips; "we have two of them on board, brothers, and a pretty pair of rascals they are. But there goes the steward's bell for tea, ladies; Miss Basset, may I have the pleasure of taking you below? She's running on a wind now, and will be pretty steady. Doctor Heriot, oblige me by doing the attentive to Miss Rose."

The young surgeon (whom the captain's request was meant to quiz) hastened, smilingly, to proffer his arm as directed, and the whole party, including Quail, the first mate, Manfredi, the third (as the second had charge of the deck), descended to the cabin, where Rose did the honours of the captain's tea-table, for Ethel was still too weak or too listless to do so.

The last to leave the deck was Cramply Hawkshaw. As he turned to descend, he looked up at the Spanish seaman, whose outline and dark profile were clearly defined against the sky.

"'Tis Pedro Barradas," he muttered; "confusion and a curse! the Barradas here."

His face was white as that of the dead—white as on the fatal evening when he entered Laurel Lodge; and he seemed scarcely to know what he was doing, as with one of his stealthy glances cast around, he descended to the cabin, from which he did not issue for the remainder of that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

ACTON CHINE.

More than three weeks have now elapsed since that eventful evening which saw Hawkshaw and Morley Ashton ascending the steep pathway that leads to Acton Chine, and which, moreover, saw the first-named personage traversing the same path homeward—but *alone*.

Though Morley was flung over the cliff, and though the turf which he grasped gave way, so that he actually fell into the yawning gulf below, he was not fated to perish.

But before the turf parted in his despairing grasp, poor Morley lived a lifetime, as it were, of keen agony.

He knew the profundity of the awful abyss that yawned in blackness far down beneath him, and he heard the roaring of the fierce waves, that leaped and boiled as if impatient of their prey.

The chine we have stated as being about 400 feet in height; its depth, to the bottom of the sea, we have no means of knowing, the foun-

dation of its rocks being far below where mortal eye can fathom.

After the name of Ethel escaped him, he had no power to utter another cry, for the terrible expression which he read in the malignant face of Hawkshaw, while standing safely on the brink above, paralysed him, and he remained silent—but silently desperate, in his wild and despairing attempts to raise himself up, and to regain a footing on the cliff; but he had no purchase (to use a mechanical term); thus, while clinging by his hands, his feet and knees scraped fruitlessly on the hard face of the basaltic rocks.

Mechanically, too, he moved his body, as one who, in sleep, dreams, and is afraid of falling.

He felt the turf rending, the last clutch of life parting, by the very efforts he made to save it. Then a blindness seemed to come upon him—a mist, through which the form of Hawkshaw seemed dilated to colossal proportions, towering between him and the sky like a destroying angel, while the roaring of the sea beneath seemed to fill all space, as with the roll of thunder.

Bead-drops of agony oozed upon his icy brow, while despair and the terror of death were in his heart, and though the whole episode lasted little more, perhaps, than a single minute, Morley Ashton lived, as we have stated, *a lifetime of agony!*

The turf gave way! a sigh—it seemed his parting soul—escaped him; *he fell,* and vanished from the eyes of Hawkshaw.

But Heaven had ordained that the poor lad was not to perish. About thirty-five, perhaps forty feet below the verge of the chine, there extends a ledge or abutting piece of rock, about five feet broad, and eight or ten feet long, so far as the eye may judge of it from the seaward, as mortal hand has never measured it; and on this natural shelf he fell heavily, and almost senseless by emotion and the shock.

A thick coarse moss, of a kind that has grown there for ages, mingled with a species of guano deposited by the sea-birds, received him softly, and broke the force of his fall, which, had the face of the basalt been bare, must have produced the most fatal injuries.

For some time Morley thought all was over, and he lay still—half stunned alike by the shock and by the suddenness of the whole event. Then his heart filled with a gush of gratitude to Heaven that he was saved, till reflection brought a thrill of horror that he was now utterly lost.

He heard still the ceaseless roaring and bellowing of the breakers, gurgling, sucking, and surging in the chine; he heard also the wild screaming of the sea-birds above and below him, as the astonished gulls and cormorants wheeled in circles, or alighted

on the shelf of rock beside him, and flapped their wings with a sharp and at times booming sound.

The evening passed away, and night came on before Morley dared to stir, to move, or look about him. In all its starry splendour, he could see the Plough and the glorious stream of the Milky Way.

Then the moon, that whilom rose as we have said, red and round as a crimson shield, at the far verge of the watery horizon, had gradually reached almost to the zenith, when her disc, small and sharply defined, shone like a ball of glowing silver amid the sparkling ether.

A broad flake of her glorious sheen poured aslant into the gaping chine, increasing, perhaps, its weird and ghastly aspect; but this broad stream of light enabled poor Morley to examine the place of his fall, and he soon saw in all their details the horrors of his hopeless situation.

Above, the rock ascended sheer as a wall to the height we have stated—a wall up which it was hopeless to think of climbing.

Below, the cliff receded from the ledge on which he lay, so that in reality the sea was foaming completely beneath him.

From the land-side his position could neither be seen nor even discovered in any way whatever; and even if it were so, in what way were the finders to succour him?

How many ships might pass before even a sailor's ready eye might detect a human figure perched so far up, among the hungry cormorants and shrieking sea-mews?

Without shelter, food, or water, how long could he survive on the giddy shelf of that storm-beaten sea-cliff, where he dared not close an eye lest he might roll into eternity below?

To ascend was impracticable; to descend was to die!

How awful it was to see the white sea-birds skimming the ocean with wings outspread, or floating in the air, and know that they were more than 300 feet below him!

If descried by the crew of a fisher-boat, the idea occurred to him of risking a plunge into the water: but from this desperate thought his heart recoiled at once. To fall whizzing through the air from such a height would insure his falling breathless into the sea, so that its waves would close over him when his lungs were empty, and he would never rise again.

Days might pass, and nights would certainly pass, during which no eye could see him, save those of the sea-birds that wheeled in circles round him, as if impatient of their repast, from which his apparent life and power of action—as he "who-whooped" from time to time to scare them—as yet denied their craving beaks and bills, but only as yet, for he anti-

cipated with horror a time when, faint and expiring, they might pounce down in one voracious flock and rend him piecemeal.

And thus Ethel, life, hope, and the world, were all cut off from him at one fell swoop, by a single blow of Hawkshaw's felon hand.

Conquered, powerless, and crushed by the united horrors of his situation; unseen, unknown, left to die within a pistol-shot of help, within forty feet of safety, he cowered his face between his knees, and murmuring, "Oh, villain! villain!" he wept like a child.

So the breakers continued to boom, so sickening in their monotony, far down below, and the night passed on. Morley strove to pray, but his mind was a chaos; he could neither thank Heaven for his first escape, nor implore aid for the future. For a time he was stupefied.

So the wild sea-birds—the black-billed auk, the mouse-coloured guillemot, the huge white gull, the rank, coarse cormorant, whose shape Milton describes Satan as assuming, when devising death, he perched upon the Tree of Life—continued to wheel and scream around the miserable Morley, who remained on his lofty perch in an agony of spirit.

The sea ebbed and flowed again; the moon paled and waned; the clouds gathered in heaven and divided again. Day stole over the brightening ocean,

and gradually a bright May morning—the same morning when, creeping from Rose's side, the weeping Ethel drew the curtains of her window, and looked forth upon the upland path that led to this fatal spot.

The morning star twinkled brightly and propitiously above the edge of the chine, and then its light faded into radiance of the growing dawn.

And with day came hope, that if he was doomed to die it might not be unseen. Morley wiped his damp brow and eyes with his handkerchief, for though the season was summer, the atmosphere was damp and chill upon the cliff above the sea.

He heard once the voice of a lark, but it was high above him.

From the place where he sat, Morley's eye could command a range of about eight miles of sea, and as the day dawned he anxiously swept the offing, but in vain; nothing was visible, but what the Ancient Mariner saw, "the sea and sky, the sea and sky," till about sunrise, when a white sail and the smoke of a steamer, both hull down, could be seen at the horizon, some thirty miles off; thus, so far as succour was concerned, they might as well have been beyond the equator.

Fourteen hours had he now been missing.

What would be the emotions, the bewilderment, the grief of Ethel?—what the specious, the artful,

it might be the villainous story framed by Hawkshaw to account for his disappearance? It might be one that would blast his character, blacken his memory, and sever even her love from him.

Was not a murderer capable of anything?

Now a fisher-boat, brown and tarry, with a patched lugsail, of no particular hue, bellying out in the fresh morning breeze, with the snow-white foam bubbling under her sharp prow, shot into sight about two miles off.

Morley shouted, though he might have saved himself the trouble, for the two men who formed her crew could no more have heard him than if he had been in the moon; but he could not repress the impulse that made him halloo to them again and again.

He waved his white handkerchief frantically. If observed, it would seem but a sea-bird's wing at such a distance; but the two black specks in the fishing-boat were seated with their backs to the shore, one intent upon handling his tiller, the other grasped the sheet, and both were enjoying their pipes and gazing seaward; so the boat, with her bellying sail, and foam-dripping prow, passed on, and Morley remained still unseen and alone.

Other three boats passed, under a press of sail, towards the fishing ground; but they were far off—so far that he scarcely made any attempt to signal them.

He felt no hunger; but now a thirst, which he had no means of allaying, and which the saline property of the atmosphere tended to increase, came upon him to add to his troubles and misery of mind and body.

Now a steamer passed, bound for Ireland, or the Isle of Man.

She was nearly ten miles off; but in the hope some idling tourist or passenger might be scanning the coast with a telescope or lorgnette, he continued, with anxious vigour, to wave his handkerchief, but waved it in vain, for she sped on her course and rapidly disappeared, though the long, smoky pennant, emitted by her funnel, lingered for hours across the sky before it melted into thin air and passed away.

And still the angry waves boomed below, and the greedy sea-birds wheeled and screamed around him. How he longed for wings like the latter!

"Oh, Heaven!" he exclaimed, "aid, inspire, and sustain me for a little time, or let me perish at once, and end this day of horror!"

More than once, he actually conceived the idea of endeavouring to lure a couple of gulls within his grasp, and then to plunge into the sea, in the hope that their flapping and outspread pinions might break the force of his descent; and once safely in the ocean, he knew that he could swim round the

chine, and reach the level beach that lies about a quarter of a mile to the westward of it.

But he might as well have hoped to catch the distant clouds or the hues of the rainbow, as those wild gulls and gannets.

So the weary day passed on, and, with horror, he contemplated the prospects of another night of hopeless watching, of sleeplessness and thirst, for he dared not close his eyes, even for a moment, lest drowsiness should come upon him, when he might topple from his perch into the eternity that yawned below.

The rising wind moaned in the chine, and waved the tufts of samphire below, and those of the grass forty feet above his head.

The sun was verging to the westward. The breeze, which had been soft and mild all day, changed, and blew keenly against the cliff, rolling the sea in billows before it; and now, about six o'clock in the evening, so far as Morley could judge—as his watch had been broken in his fall—a smart, square-rigged vessel—a ship, as he soon perceived—lying as near the wind as she could, on a long starboard tack, came gradually near the shore.

When she first hove in sight she might have been six miles off, but was running steadily towards the chine.

Morley knew that she would come within half a mile, or less, of the coast, without going about or shortening sail, as the water was so deep; so he resolved not to miss this chance of life and rescue!

To have a larger signal than his handkerchief, he drew off his white shirt, and, holding it by the sleeves, permitted the whole garment to wave out like a banner on the wind.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESCUE.

On came the beautiful ship, with all her white canvas shining in the setting sun. Her deck, on which, from his fearful perch, Morley could look completely down, was spotless, and her crew seemed pigmies, herself a toy, but one, nevertheless, instinct with life, as she flew before the breeze, careening gracefully over, with the white foam curling under the bows, and sweeping past her counter, to form a long grey wake in the green sea astern.

Frantically Morley waved his impromptu banner, his signal of distress; and long he continued to do so, bathed in perspiration, and enduring an agony of hope and anxiety, before he could perceive the crew hastening to the bows, the forecastle bitts, and some ascending into the fore-rigging, as if to have a better look at him.

"Hurrah! and blessed be God, they have seen me!" he exclaimed.

At that moment up went the scarlet ensign to the

gaff-peak, from whence it was dipped once, and hoisted again, as a signal that he had been observed.

On she comes; and now she is about half a mile distant from the rocks of Acton Chine. A man is heaving the lead in the fore-chains, but no soundings are there for more than forty fathoms; and borne over the water, and upward through the ambient air, the words of command came clearly to Morley's excited ear.

Now the headsails shiver, heavily flap the jib, forestaysail, and foretopmast-staysail, round swings the main and maintopsail yards sharp to windward, and now she lies to, with her broadside to the shore.

A quarter-boat is lowered; six men—Morley can count them—drop into her; something is thrown in, Morley knows not what, but a telescope would have revealed that it is a coil of stout rope.

Now the oars are shipped. Bravo! she is shoved off, and the dripping blades flash in the last rays of the setting sun, as she darts from the ship's side, and sweeps round the promontory, and out of sight, towards the little cove, where Morley knew there was a landing-place and little strip of white sand.

Morley waited nearly an hour—it seemed an age—after this. The ship still lay off the rocky shore, rolling heavily on the ground swell—so heavily, that the cracking flap of her loose canvas reached his ear sometimes. Once the mainyard was slued round,

and sail was made on her for a little way, as if she had been drifted by wind and current rather too close in shore; but again the yard was backed, and, as before, she lay to, motionless and still.

The sun had gone down, dusk was stealing over the land, and the warm saffron flush that bathed the western sea and sky became obscured by masses of copper-coloured clouds.

Morley's heart beat wildly; he listened, but heard only the boom of the eternal breakers in the horrid grave that yawned below, and the screaming of the sea-birds around him.

Suddenly he heard a cheer—the mingled shout of several voices—ring in mid-air above him. Oh, how his poor heart bounded at the sound!

He looked upward, as he had done a hundred times before, but saw nothing, save the impending rock, for a time, till suddenly something appeared to swing over it, between him and the sky.

Down it came, and soon he grasped it, and the rope to which it was attached.

Wrapped round with a seaman's neckerchief, it proved to be a pint bottle, with a memorandum, written in pencil, twisted round the neck.

"*Take a pull at the bottle, to give you strength, and lash the line round you; tie the knot well, for your life depends on it. Then pass up the word to hoist away, and never fear but we shall pull you up.*"

Such were the directions pencilled on the scrap of paper.

With a sigh of joy and gratitude, Morley, faint, weary, and trembling in every limb and every nerve, uncorked the bottle, which contained brandy-grog—stiff half-and-half. As directed, he took a hearty "pull" thereat, for strength and coolness were alike necessary now.

He then cast the bottle into the profundity below. No sound followed its descent: and the fall of a sixty-four-pound shot would have caused none there.

He tied the rope round his body, under the arm-pits, but with considerable difficulty, as his hands trembled like aspen leaves.

"All ready? heave away!" he shouted.

After a time the rope was tightened from above; a few sharp tugs followed, as if those who sought to save him wished to assure themselves that all was secure below.

Then followed the familiar "Yeo-heo!" of merchant seamen when pulling together, and Morley felt his scalp bristling as he was lifted off his feet and swung into mid-air.

The hated ledge of rock—hated, though, but for its lucky intervention, he must long ago have "slept the sleep that knows no waking"—receded below him, and he was dragged up the face of the bluff so speedily that all his care was requisite, by the use

of hands and feet, to save his face and knees from being bruised and torn.

At last he reached the verge—that awful verge, close to where the tufts of grass had parted in his seeming death-grasp. Here a stoppage, a trivial delay, occurred; Morley was too blind and giddy to know why or wherefore, but he was not without fear that the knot his feeble hands had tied might break loose, or that the chafed cord might part, here, as it were, upon the threshold of the world and a new lease of existence; nor did he feel secure until he felt himself grasped bodily by the strong hands of several sturdy seamen, dragged in, as it were, and landed like a huge fish on the grass. Pale, panting, weak, weary, and becoming breathless, he fainted outright.

"Here's a coil, mate," said one of the seamen. "The poor fellow has gone right off into a swound, and is as useless as a wet swab."

"What's to be done now, Mr. Morrison?" asked another.

"We can't leave him, dying, it may be, of starvation," replied the seaman addressed—one in authority, apparently, and who spoke English correctly, but with a Scottish accent. "No house is nearer than yonder hamlet. He is well rigged, and don't look like a poor samphire gatherer, after all. How the dickens did he get

up or get down there, unless on a grey gull's back?"

"Take a leg and an arm, Bill. Heave ahead. We must get him down from this 'tarnal steep bluff, somehow."

And, carrying Morley as carefully as they could, the seamen, who were six in number, proceeded downwards by the narrow path which led to the beach.

So intent had these worthy fellows been on their humane operations, that they had completely failed to observe how the dense clouds had been banking up to seaward; how the waves were curling up, white and frothy, and how the wind was freshening, till it swept the spoon-drift off each foaming crest, into the trough between; or how the ship had doused her royals, and handed her topgallant-sails, to make all snug for the coming blast.

"We have not a moment to lose," said Morrison, the mate. "It is almost dark already, lads—very dark for a May night. A breeze in shore is coming on fast. Let's be off to the ship without delay."

"But this poor fellow, sir."

"Can't be left to die upon the beach. It would be clear murder, mates."

"Let us take him aboard with us, and send him ashore with the first in-shore craft we overhaul after he gets his sea-legs."

"In, in! Here comes the gale! Out oars! Shove off!"

And thus Morley Ashton, still insensible, or completely stupefied and passive, in three minutes more was speeding over the rising waves, as fast as six oars could bear him, towards the unknown ship.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OLD SHIPMATE.

For twenty-four hours after he was on board, Morley Ashton was alternately faint and delirious. His nervous system had been overstrained, and thus, for a time, he knew not where he was, by whom rescued, or by whom surrounded, and, at times, he still fancied himself on his awful perch above Acton Chine, and still in his ears he seemed to hear the roar of the waves and the screaming of the sea-birds.

Meanwhile a heavy gale had sprung up, and the ship which sheltered him had been compelled to stand off to sea, pursuing her course south-south-west, and thus the land had vanished astern some seven hours before Morley recovered complete consciousness, and began to look curiously and inquiringly around him.

Was he in a dream?

Whence the strange and not unfamiliar odour of new paint and tar, and the close atmosphere, so undeniably that of a ship's cabin? Then there

were the creaking of timbers, the jarring of all sorts of things, the swaying to and fro of a chained lamp, of a brass tell-tale compass, that swung in the skylight—the swaying, also, of berth-curtains on brass rods and rings, the rattle of racks and plates and dishes in an open locker, the clatter of blocks on deck, and the gurgling wash of water against the outer sheathing, with the jolting of the rudder, and the rasping of its chains.

Aided by the gleams of uncertain radiance that came down the square skylight, and sometimes with prismatic hues through the yokes that were inserted in the planking of the deck, Morley looked around him, and became assured, beyond a doubt, that he was a-bed in the cabin of a ship under sail, and in no dream at all.

At that moment footsteps were heard descending the companion ladder, and a seaman, muffled in a storm jacket and sou'-wester, both of which were shining with salt spray, approached the berth in which Morley lay.

"Bartelot—Tom Bartelot! old friend and school-fellow," he exclaimed, with bewilderment, "where on earth did you come from?"

"Not from among the clouds and gulls, as you did, Morley," replied the other, laughing.

"And so—so *you* are beside me!"

"Of course I am, and right glad to see you again

Ashton; but this is a queer business of yours, old fellow."

"How?—why?—where am I?"

"Aboard my ship, to be sure."

"Then I have had fever again, and have never been at home; have never seen Ethel! Have never been thrown into Acton Chine! I have had dreams, Tom—oh, such dreams!"

"I rather think you have, Morley."

"How mad I must have been, and such queer things I must have said. Did I speak about the Bassets and the Isle of France? I would have sworn that I had seen Ethel, had spoken to her, and —and kissed her many times. Dear Ethel! And so we are still on board your brig in the Bonny River?"

"Now, what are you talking about? You are most awfully at sea, in more ways than one!" exclaimed Bartelot, thrusting his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and regarding Morley with great surprise. "My poor chum, Ashton, you are not aboard my old brig, the *Rattler*, of Liverpool, at Foche Point, with the yellow flag—the sign of fever —flying at the foremasthead, but aboard of my new ship, the *Princess*, of London, of 300 tons register (we won't say what burden) and A 1 at Lloyd's, bound for Rio de Janeiro, with a mixed cargo, and now about eighty miles off the Land's End and Cape Cornwall."

"Tom, Tom, how you bewilder me," groaned Morley.

"We are just clearing St. George's Channel with a glorious breeze—quite aft—though it will soon be upon the starboard quarter, I fear. So now, my boy, tell me how the deuce you came to be perched up aloft among the gulls and gannets on yonder rocks? A most fearful place it is, and a world of trouble it cost my first mate, Bill Morrison, to get you towed up in safety."

The silence almost of stupefaction succeeded this information, and some time elapsed before Morley could understand or realise the truth of it.

Meanwhile, let us describe Captain Thomas Bartelot, of the ship *Princess*, of London.

He had a free, open, jovial, and merry expression, a fresh and ruddy complexion, a pleasant voice, and a very winning manner. He was a stout, rather gentlemanly man, about ten years older than Morley, but more muscular, better developed, and thicker, especially about the arms, the biceps whereof indicated that he had been used to a good deal of pulling and hauling in his time. He had on a glazed sou'-wester, the strings and ear-laps of which he untied, and a storm-jacket of tarred canvas, secured by horn-buttons, of which attire he now proceeded to disencumber himself, for on deck the weather had been rough, and the spray

was flying in showers of foam over the catheads, occasionally over the quarter, and he "had just left the ship in charge of Morrison," he said, "and come below for the double purpose of seeing how Morley was getting on, and procuring a caulker from the steward's locker." After a pause, during which time the said "caulker" was imbibed from a square case-bottle: "When you were brought on board, Morley, by Morrison and the boat's crew, I was so surprised at recognising you," said Bartelot, "that I scarcely knew whether my head or heels were on the deck. You were in a death-like faint, or I would have sent you ashore again. The night was fast becoming dark, and the weather foul. We couldn't keep dodging about the coast, as Admiral Fitzroy had telegraphed, 'Gales of wind expected from all quarters;' so I resolved to give the land a wide berth (lucky it was for you that we hugged it so close!) and stood off to sea. I am sorry for that, Morley, but I couldn't help it, old boy; insurance brokers, ship agents, and owners won't stand trifling nowadays, so console yourself that it was no worse. You couldn't have fallen into better hands than Tom Bartelot, eh? Look there," he continued, pointing to a small yellow map of Britain, framed and glazed on the bulkhead, and having all the coast surrounded by little black spots. "Each of these spots, Morley, marks a wreck of last year.

It is the 'Wreck Chart,' published by the Life-boat Institution, and it shows quite enough of black spots in the Bristol Channel to warrant me in getting out to sea; and somehow, to my mind, we have had three gales now for one we used to have before Admiral Fitzroy took to telegraphing about his south and north cones, storm-drums, and what not. Old Gawthrop, one of our men, swears he whistles up the very gales he telegraphs. But speak, Morley, why don't you say something? Am I to have all the talking to myself?"

"Oh, Tom, I owe my life to you."

"To Bill Morrison, rather."

"Who is he?"

"My Scotch mate."

"But this adventure, and my being taken off to sea, I know not whither——"

"Rio de Janeiro, I told you."

"It ruins my prospects for ever!"

"Sorry to hear you say so; but we'll put you aboard the first homeward-bound craft we overhaul. Till then, you are heartily welcome to swing your hammock in my cabin, and to share our junk and grog."

"Thanks, thanks, old fellow; but a homeward-bound ship will avail me little."

"The deuce!—would you wish to swim or fly?"

"Unless I could be landed near Acton-Rennel,

and within a week, it matters not where I am; for Ethel Basset, if she lives—survives my supposed loss—don't laugh in that way, Tom, please—must be, like myself——"

"How—where?"

"Upon the sea."

"Drink this," said Bartelot, handing him a tumbler of wine-and-water; "and now tell me all about this matter, for I own to being rather curious about it."

Morley related his story briefly and rapidly.

"My berth was secured and paid for on board the *Hermione,* of London."

"I know the craft well, and jolly Jack Phillips, her captain, too," said Bartelot; "a fine old fellow he is, and your friends are in capital hands."

"I was to have sailed with them for the Isle of France," said Morley, in a voice like a groan; "sailed once more in search of fortune—the blind jade! Ah, Tom, the Romans were right when they depicted her as a woman, for she has much to do in the happiness or misery of man."

"Is that the wine or water talking now?" asked Tom, supplying himself with another measure, nautically named "a caulker," from the before-mentioned square case-bottle.

"Don't chaff me, Tom, for mine is an evil destiny."

"Oh, bother! don't talk of destiny, like a fellow in tights, with a broad-brimmed tile, addressing the lustre, or the footlights, at the Surrey. Every man who has a steady heart—a heart, mind you, that don't yaw even when the wind is foul—and keeps a strong hand on the tiller of perseverance, is the maker of his own destiny. I learned that long ago, before I knew the mizzen-top from a marlin-spike. This spirit will make a man go right before the wind, through even Hamlet's 'sea of troubles,' and never heed the waves or breakers thereof."

"Why, Tom," said Morley, with a sad smile, "you are a regular salt-water preacher."

"A philosopher if you will; but no preacher—oh, d——n it, I haven't come to that. I suppose that piratical beggar—what's his name?"

"Hawkshaw — Cramply Hawkshaw," replied Morley, through his clenched teeth.

"I suppose he will consider you quite a gone 'coon, as the Yankees say; but you must haul up for the Mauritius (if we can find a ship for thence at Rio, which is not very likely) and have the fellow exposed, tried, and punished as he deserves."

"Punished! how know I that ere I can reach the Mauritius, penniless as I am——"

"Penniless! You young swab, don't you know that you can command my purse—no great matter certainly—to the last farthing?"

"Thanks, my dear Bartelot."

"Well, as you were about to say, before you may reach the Mauritius——"

"He may be—he may be——"

"What?"

"The husband of Ethel Basset."

"Whe-e-e-uh!" whistled Tom Bartelot.

"How can I foresee what one so subtle, so daring, so reckless as Hawkshaw may achieve!"

"Well, drink your wine-and-water; remain quiet in the meantime. You may keep all your night watches *below* if you like, and, till you regain your strength, content yourself with exercise by day—a Dutchman's promenade, three steps and overboard, eh?"

There was a pause, during which Morley sighed deeply.

"Cheer up, Morley," said jolly Tom Bartelot; "look firmly ahead, and boldly face the little spray and black scud of misfortune. Pursue your present way contented for some time at least, with confidence and hope, and never look astern. It is no use, as nothing ever comes that way, either for good or for evil. It would be a poor love that won't outlast a sea voyage, however long it might be, and if Miss Basset forgets you——"

"Forgets me—agony! Tom, she may be made to believe that I have deserted her."

"Impossible!"

"That I have been murdered, then!"

"Hawkshaw would not tell upon himself, surely?"

"That I fell over the cliff and was drowned!".

"Ah—that would be a likely tale enough."

"I know not what specious tale the villain may form to deceive Ethel and her father," continued Morley, impetuously.

"When at Rio, write to her all about it."

"Write! By the ship that bore my letter, I would fly to her."

"I should prefer sailing; but every man to his taste. In another day or so, according to your own showing, she will be upon the sea!"

"True—true, and with that wretch, most probably," said Morley, relapsing into wretchedness, and striking his forehead with his hand.

"Come, come," urged Bartelot, patting him on the shoulder, "turn out and take a sniff of the breeze on deck. Another glass of wine first; drink and be jolly, man. What says the old song? for it is an old song of Captain Topham's, and none of mine, be assured!

"'You bid me my jovial companions forsake,
The joys of a rural recess to partake;
With you, my good friend, I'll retreat to the vine,
Its shelter be yours, but its nectar be mine;

For each 'twill a separate pleasure produce,
You cool in its shade, while I glow with its juice;
For own no delight with his rapture can vie,
Who always is drinking, yet always is dry.'"

"Many a night have we sung that together when in the Bonny River, on board the dear old *Rattler*," said Morley, listening with pleasure to the song which Bartelot trolled forth with a fine mellow voice.

"Ah!—the *Rattler*," said Bartelot, sighing; "they broke her up for firewood—think of that. I sent my old mother at Liverpool a table made out of her timber."

"Go ahead, Tom—finish your song."

"Ah, there is life in the old dog yet, I see," replied Bartelot as he resumed:

"'The lover (that's you, Morley) may talk of his flames
and his darts,
His judgment of eyes and his conquest of hearts;
May smile with the wanton, and sport with the gay,
Enjoy when he can and desert when he may;
Yet the warmest adherents of love must deplore
That its favours when tasted are favours no more;
Then how can such joys with his ecstasy vie,
Who always is drinking, yet always is dry?'"

As Tom concluded (he was not a bit of a toper, as we shall show ere long, though he sang so bacchanalian a ditty), the sunlight died away, the cabin became gloomy, the rolling of the ship and the noise on deck increased.

"The gale freshens," said he, "and the glass is

falling fast. We shall have the wind blowing great guns to-night, so we must close our shutters, as I once heard a lubber call them. Don't you remember, Mr. de Vavasour Spout, the Cockney supercargo? 'Steward, pass the word to Mr. Morrison to have the dead lights shipped. I must be off to the deck, Morley, and have some more cloth taken off her—send down the topgallant yards, get the lumber out of the tops, and bend the trysail aft."

Morley was too feeble to leave his berth for that night, especially as the *Princess* encountered a heavy gale of wind.

He could slumber, but his dreams were wild, and disturbed by starts, visions, and memories of all he had undergone; and every thought of Acton Chine and its horrors caused a shudder to pass through his frame.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER THE TROPIC OF CAPRICORN.

Next morning, when Morley ventured up, everything was dripping wet; on deck and aloft all bore cheerless evidence of a rough night that had passed.

The *Princess* had but little canvas spread, for the sea was rising still; the fore, main, and mizzen topsails were taken off her, and ere long she was speeding before the wind and sea under a close-reefed foresail and storm staysail.

Morrison, one of the most powerful men on board, with another grim old seaman, named Noah Gawthrop, whose weather-beaten visage resembled nothing on land or sea but a knot on a gnarled oak tree, were at the wheel, and it was with the utmost difficulty they could keep the helm, so heavily did breaker after breaker poop the ship.

Though heavy, the wind was fair for the *Princess*, but it bore her away from the shores of Britain, was Morley's first and regretful idea.

No other craft was in sight, and the gray sky imparted an opaque tint to the dark and tumbling sea,

which seemed to follow her brine-dripping sides, as swiftly she darted on, at times cleaving asunder, or riding across, the long rolling mountains of water that burst in hissing showers over the varnished bowsprit and gilded catheads, over the iron windlass and forecastle bitts, and after drenching the cowering watch, poured away through the scuppers to leeward as the buoyant ship rose on each successive wave, like a gallant sea-bird trussing her pinions.

Amid that waste of waters, no living thing was visible from the deck, save a brown flock of Mother Carey's chickens, the stormy petrels, tripping with outspread wings up the slope of one wave and down the slope of another.

Though accustomed to the sea, by his past voyaging, Morley gazed around him with a bewildered air. He addressed something—he knew not what—to the men at the wheel, but the Scotch mate was too full of anxiety about his steering to reply, and, as for Mr. Noah Gawthrop, he heard the remark with stolid indifference, and expectorated vociferously to leeward.

The bronzed face and keen gray eyes of the Scotchman were turned alternately to the leech of the close-reefed foresail, the bellying of the storm staysail, and the compass-box, while his feet were planted firmly on the deck-grating, and his weather-

beaten hands grasped the wheel like his shipmate on the other side.

Neither of these men ever spoke to each other. Instinct and skill taught them simultaneously and mutually when to keep her full and by, when to let her yaw, or when to let her ship a sea.

Wearied with toil, and the double watching of the past night, Captain Bartelot was asleep in his damp clothes on the cabin-locker. So noon passed away, and still the *Princess* flew on through mist and spray, under her close-reefed foresail and storm staysail.

Another vessel, similarly stripped of canvas, flew past them on the opposite tack, and, like a spectre, disappeared in the wrack and gloom; but, anon, the wind and sea went gradually down together, the clouds burst asunder, and the sun came joyously forth.

The gale gradually abated to a fine spanking breeze, the mainsail was set, and the reefs shaken out of the foresail; topsail after topsail were hoisted and sheeted home. Then followed the studding-sails and royals, and the *Princess*, with everything on her that "would draw," swept out into the waters of the mighty Atlantic.

A lovely evening followed, and a rosy sunset, but not a ship was in sight, and Morley now calculated that they must be more than 200 miles from land.

"By Jove, this is excellent!" exclaimed Tom Bartelot, lounging back in his chair, after a late dinner (for on this day the cook's fire had been washed out of the caboose); "how happy I am to have you here, Morley. Confess, old fellow, that you couldn't have fallen into better hands."

"I do confess it most willingly; but, my dear old friend, I must be set on shore, if possible, at the first opportunity. I have Hawkshaw to punish, and Ethel to save from the insult of his presence."

"On shore, with the breeze blowing thus—the Scilly Isles more than 150 miles astern, and not a sail in sight."

"But, Ethel—the Bassets—what will they think of my sudden disappearance? What story may that rascal tell them?"

"Nothing that you can't unsay by-and-bye."

"Unsay when it may be too late."

"Too late!"

"And to have Ethel left in the power, or rather, subjected to the wiles and addresses of one so cruel, so artful."

"Tut, tut, if she would slip from her moorings by the old man's side, to sail in company with a rascally pirate, she's not worth much, friend Morley, and certainly not worth regretting."

"Ethel shall judge what I have suffered, by what she is suffering herself."

"Try some of that brandy-and-water, and don't get into the doldrums. Light a cheroot—there's a box of capital ones on the locker behind you. Have patience; in a few months at farthest——"

"Months! You talk to me of patience, Tom, as if you had never seen me practise it."

"In what way?"

"Have you forgotten when I was broiling, for a pittance, on the Bonny river? how I toiled, worked, aye, slaved, and cheered myself with the thoughts of Ethel Basset, and an English home? For three years I had patience, amid adversity and illness. Heaven knows how I got through those three years, Tom."

"Just as you shall get over the three months that must pass before you reach the Mauritius after visiting Rio."

"Well, I returned, as I have told you, to find that her future home was to be elsewhere than in England; that we were to be separated, perhaps, hopelessly; that I had a rival, too, a kinsman, a *protégé* of her father's, a son of a certain Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn—a fellow without honour, honesty, money, or scruple."

"I'd like to give him a dip at the end of a deep-sea line."

"Sail, homeward-bound, on the weather-bow!" reported Morrison, one morning, a few days after this.

Morley's heart leaped, and he rushed on deck to look at the stranger—a smart bark, close-hauled, with all her starboard-tacks aboard. She was evidently a foreigner, being painted a pale pea-green.

"A Baltic craft, I take her to be," said Morrison. "Here she comes, running sharp on a wind, with a bone in her teeth."

"A bone?" repeated Morley.

"Yes; the spray flying under her cutwater, and over her catheads. Don't you remember the fun we used to have with De Vavasour Spout, the cockney supercargo, when talking all manner of nautical rubbish to him. Morrison, run up our ensign; lay the mainyard to the mast; steward, hand up the trumpet, we'll overhaul her."

The orders were promptly obeyed; the stranger also backed his mainyard, and showed his ensign—black and white.

"Prussian," said Morrison.

"Bound for the Elbe," added Bartelot, whose hail was answered in a hoarse dissonance, that made even Noah Gawthrop's grim visage relax with a smile, as he sent the *débris* of his quid to leeward, and anathematised foreigners in general, and their lingos in particular, while each vessel stood off on her course again.

"No chance for you, Morley," said Bartelot, "so we'll give it up and think no more about it."

Ten days elapsed after this, and, in all that space never once did the *Princess* come within hail of a homeward-bound ship, so Morley strove to resign himself to his fate.

"Rio de Janeiro be it," said he.

He took his watch with the rest of the crew, and endeavoured to make the time pass; but weary, weary was his lot for days and weeks—days and weeks of mental suffering, during which he fretted, chafed, and loathed, at times, the floating prison which bore him away, almost hopelessly, from the watery path which he now concluded Ethel must be traversing—she, due southward, towards the sun; and he, south-westward, towards the land of fire.

It is an age of swift postal arrangements, of telegrams, magnetic and electric, but nothing could avail Morley there on the wide, wide sea; the appliances of modern science were there as nugatory and of as little avail as in the days when Columbus ploughed the same waters in search of the western world—he had nothing to console him save patience and hope.

She might be dying of grief for his loss, for people sometimes do die of grief, though, pardon me for the heresy, fair reader, people seldom die for love; and, unless assisted by some good genii or spirits of the air, Morley was powerless, and without the means of acquainting her that he was safe, alive, well, and

had miraculously escaped a most foul and deliberate attempt to assassinate him.

So, weary were the days and more weary the nights, while the swift ship flew on, making a most prosperous voyage towards a clime of sunnier skies and brighter seas than those of England; but, weary though it seemed, and insufferably slow, the time passed, nevertheless.

Each day the sun grew hotter and rose higher overhead.

The Line was passed; Father Neptune came on board in all the splendour of oakum wig, tar, and yellow ochre; and Morley, having crossed the Line before, escaped being shaved with a hoop and bathed in salt water, though old Noah Gawthrop, who personated the god of the ocean, and Morrison, who personated Amphitrite, the mother of Triton, had some very waggish views respecting him. And now the atmosphere was hot, indeed.

"When I was last at Rio," said old Noah, whose voice, like worthy Tom Pipes's, had "a cadence like that of an east wind singing through a cranny"—"the crabs and winkles were roasted in their shells upon the shore."

The winds continued favourable; the *Princess* steadily held her course, and the day on which they would probably see Rio Janeiro was already confidently spoken of by Tom Bartelot and his first

mate, Bill Morrison, for both were practical seamen, and holders of first-class certificates.

Though a grave and stern man, and one deeply imbued with many of the northern superstitions of his country, with a few—but luckily a very few—of its theological whim-whams, Morrison became a great friend of Morley, and, though a believer in mysterious lights, warnings, and presentiments, in second sight, second hearing, and so forth, he was remarkably well informed, well educated, and spoke Latin, and more than one European language fluently.

His face was browned by long exposure to every climate in the world; he had faced all the dangers of the deep, and their name is legion; he was hardy, tough, and athletic, and, being at times conversational, he learned from Morley, long ere the voyage was over, the whole history of his love, rivalry, and adventures.

"Take heart, young gentleman," said he, as they kept their watch together on a lovely moonlight night, when drawing near the tropic of Capricorn; "when I was a bairn at home, my mother (God bless her puir auld body!) aye taught me that 'the ways o' Providence were dark and intricate, perplexed wi' mazes and distressed wi' errors,' and I have seen but little reason to alter my opinion in manhood, or as I grow aulder in the horn, as we say in Scotland.

But something tells me that you will bring this rascally piccaroon up wi' a round turn yet."

"But Miss Basset?"

"If *she* countenanced him," interrupted the Scotchman, turning his keen gray eyes and knitted brows to Morley, "why, then, I say, e'en let her go with a flowing sheet."

"Which means——"

"That you'll be well free of so unseaworthy a craft."

So, at this period of their story, the loved and the loving, Morley Ashton and Ethel Basset, are both traversing the same mighty ocean. Morley knew that, if Ethel lived, she would now inevitably be sailing for the Isle of France; but she, alas! believed that her lover was no more, and lost to her indeed for ever!

Will they ever meet more?

They may meet peacefully and happily again, never to separate; or, it may be, that they shall be united never more on this side of the grave, for both are now upon the sea, and the perils encountered by those who go down into the great deep and see the wonders thereof—wreck, storm, fire, mutiny, piracy, and famine—may be the lot of one or of both.

The wheel of fortune turns, and anon we shall see!

CHAPTER XVII.

SECOND HEARING.

The Scotch mate, Morrison, spun many a strange yarn to Morley, when together they kept their watches at night under the glorious radiance of a tropical moon, when the vast sea shone like a silver flood, over which the *Princess* glided before the trade wind, with all her canvas, topsails, and top-gallant sails set.

"When falling over those rocks, on which we found you, Ashton," said he, on one of those occasions, "did you utter any person's name?"

"Not that I remember of—why?" asked Morley, with surprise.

"Because—I have known of such things—*that* person might have heard your cry, however far distant."

"I do not understand."

"I mean on the principle, or rather the theory, of polarity. In the terror and despair of such a moment, your thoughts would flash, or rush to some one whom you loved—say Miss Basset—who became

the recipient of the force, the hearer of your cry, by that faculty which is called in some countries *second hearing.*"

Morley, though he coloured at Ethel's name, smiled, for he knew that this was another of Morrison's strange theories.

"I never heard of an instance of this," said he; "have you?"

"I shall tell you," replied Morrison; "but, perhaps, you won't believe me?"

"Why?"

"Because you English are so sceptical about the mystic, generally."

"I shall try, however."

"When I was third mate of the *Queen of Scots,* a clipper ship of Aberdeen, on a voyage home from Memel, we encountered in the North Sea a dreadful gale from the westward. We stripped the ship of everything, until at length we hove her to under a close-reefed main-topsail.

"The night was dark—black as pitch, as the saying is; the sea white as snow with foam, and the wind blew as if the clerk of the weather was determined to blow his last.

"The captain was on deck, holding on by the weather mizzen rattlings by one hand, while the other held his speaking trumpet.

"'Away! forward! Morrison,' he shouted to me,

'and see the flying-jib stowed,' for somehow it had got loose.

"It was a perilous duty to perform at such a time, and in such a wild night. So, being loth to order a man for it, I undertook the task myself.

"I *felt* my way, like a man in the dark, along the wet and slippery bowsprit, which one moment seemed tilted up in the air, and the next went surging, cap under, in the seething trough of the sea, when the bows of the *Queen* plunged down. Then I felt as if my heart was in my mouth, for I was but a young sailor, and thought of what would come of poor old mother and dad at home, if I should perish, and there would be no share of my wages to get monthly from our owners.

"At that moment I planted my feet on the lee-ward foot-rope, and nearly fell into the world of waters that yawned and whirled below.

"In my fall I caught a rope, and swung at the end of it, like a salmon grilse at the end of a line.

"None spoke to me, lest even to suggest anything might cost me my life, and none could aid me, for I was beyond the ship altogether. My shipmates seemed paralysed by the same peril that filled my own heart with despair and dread of death. I was but a youth; so the exclamation, 'God help me, mother!' escaped me, and was swept away by the howling wind.

"At length, favoured by a lurch of the ship, I somehow regained my footing on the bowsprit. I stowed the jib in its netting, crept along the dripping spar, and regained the deck, where the men crowded round me with congratulations on my escape; for, had I remained even one moment longer among the foot-ropes, I should never have been seen again, as thrice in succession, with awful rapidity, the ship went forward, plunging bows and bowsprit under the sea with such force, that the starboard cathead and all our headrails were swept away.

"Well, sir, at that very hour—aye, at that very moment—my poor old mother, who was a-bed and asleep in her cottage by the Don, was awakened by a voice, which, with true maternal instinct and terror, she knew to be mine, crying as if in agony, and from a vast distance—'God help me, mother!'

"In the still and silent night, it rang dreadfully in her startled ears, and in her anxious heart. She roused her neighbours, and declared—poor auld body—with loud lamentations, that her dear Willie, her sailor laddie, her only bairn, was drowned; but it was only my thoughts that had rushed homeward, and she had received them in her sleep.

"It was, indeed, my voice she had heard, swept—He who holds the great deep in the hollow of his hand alone knows how—over the wide, roaring

waste of the North Sea, and she never ceased to mourn for me, till our ship was signalled off the Girdleness, and all reported safe on board."

As Morley was neither so superstitious nor so deeply read as his Scotch friend, and consequently was ignorant of Dr. Ennemoser's queer theory of polarity, he could only listen in silence, as this was only one of many anecdotes such as Morrison was wont to beguile the watches of the night with.

At the time he fell over the cliff, and clutched the turf at Hawkshaw's feet, the name of "Ethel" escaped him, as we have related; but Morley had no recollection of the circumstance, and though at that dread moment his very soul seemed to fly to her, no warning voice came to poor Ethel's ear, so, in this instance, the first mate's theory was at fault.

"How steadily the trade wind holds," said he. "Watch, ahoy there, forward! set the royals and top-gallant studding-sails, and up with the flying jib—quick, lads, rouse it out of the netting, and hoist away."

These orders were promptly obeyed, and faster flew the *Princess* through the phosphorescent water, which seemed to smoke under her counter, and gleamed in millions of sparks in the long wake, that could be traced astern for miles upon the moonlit sea.

"I have sometimes wondered, Mr. Ashton, what

would be the emotions of a murderer, at such a moment as that I endured, when clinging among the hamper of the wet bowsprit, on that night in the North Sea, or when in any similar peril," observed the mate, recurring to his anecdote, as they trod to and fro.

"His emotions would be anything but enviable. That man, Hawkshaw, must feel himself a deliberate and cold-blooded assassin, and I frequently wonder how he comforts himself."

"I should not like to go to sea with that fellow," said the mate; "no ship that has a murderer on board can reach its destination in safety, or at least without accident."

"Another of your theories, I hope; but pray don't say so," said Morley, thinking of the Bassets; "yet he was only an assassin in intent—not fact. Moreover, he may not be on board the *Hermione* at all."

"Will you be surprised if I tell you that *I* was once accused of murder?" asked Morrison, turning his grave, grim Scotch face with a smile to Morley; "aye, and marooned, too, as one, though innocent as the babe that is unborn. It is a queer yarn, so I don't mind telling it to you.

"Before I shipped aboard the *Queen of Scots*, I was a foremast man of a Peterhead whaler that was bound for a fishing trip to the north.

"Off the Noss-head, a rocky bluff on the south of Sinclair's Bay, and which has a dry cavern in it always full of seals, we encountered a tremendous storm, which carried away our flying jib-boom snapping it like a clay pipe right off at the cap; at the same time we lost our long-boat with all our live stock; so, amid whirlwinds of foam, we ran round Stromo, hauled up for Thurso Bay, and came to anchor under the lee of the land in Scrabster Roads to refit.

"Our skipper ordered another long-boat from old Magnus Sigurdson, a boat-builder at Scrabster, who had a fine one nearly complete, and ready on the stocks in his yard, and which, for certain reasons of his own, he was remarkably anxious to get rid of at almost any price. Thus, ere she was brought aboard and lashed to the boat-chocks amidships, strange stories concerning her reached the ears of our crew, when drinking in the public-houses of Thurso.

"It would seem that when old Magnus, his wife, and family were a-bed at night, they were roused by the sound of a hammer knocking at the sides of the boat in the building-yard; then came the clinking, as of nails being driven into her planks, with other noises, so exactly like those made by Magnus when at his daily work, that his gudewife, Alie Sigurdson, had some difficulty in believing that he was in bed beside her.

"'Perhaps it is some idle callants amusing themselves among the chips,' said Magnus, on the third night, and tried to sleep; but louder grew the hammering; so at last he leaped from his bed, dressed himself, and went forth to the yard. But no one was there; the strange sounds had ceased; the night was starry and still, and he only heard the hollow booming of those great billows that roll for ever, in snow-white mountains, over the Kirkebb, against the rocks of the Bishop's Castle, the cliffs of Pennyland, and the piers of Thurso: for there three vast currents meet from the German, the Atlantic, and the Northern oceans.

"All the family of old Sigurdson heard the hammering, night after night, while the boat remained on the stocks, and the sound thereof made his poor bairns cower and nestle in the recesses of their box beds with affright; yet not a mark could be seen upon its ribs, thwarts, or sheathing, even after she was painted.

"At last the boat was upon rollers, and ready to be run to the beach.

"On that night the din of hammers in the yard of Magnus Sigurdson exceeded any that had ever rung there before. Quicker, thicker, faster than ten smiths' hammers ringing upon as many anvils, rang the strokes, and the old man listened with fear and trembling.

"Bible in hand, he crept forth at last.

"Still there was nothing to be seen, save the unlucky boat standing on its props in the broad moonlight; but in the lulls or intervals of the breakers that rolled upon the distant beach, he heard moans of distress, sighs of fatigue, and faint mutterings, which seemed to proceed from the boat itself.

"Such was the history of our new longboat, a story still current in the north of Scotland; and such was the craft in which I found myself at midnight, alone amid the North Sea, marooned and abandoned by my shipmates on a charge of murder.

"You may imagine what I felt in such a situation.

"Despising the stories that were current concerning the boat, our skipper had it shipped, paid Magnus Sigurdson his money, and we sailed from Scrabster Roads for the whale fishery. Four days after we were becalmed in the North Sea, some fifty miles or so beyond the Skaw of Unst.

"Day succeeded day, night succeeded night, and there came no wind. Around us—strange it was in such a latitude—the sea seemed like oil, so still, so glassy and waveless. Loose in its brails, the canvas flapped against the masts and yards; and now, when too late, the men whispered anew, and murmured about the bewitched boat of Magnus Sigurdson.

"At the far horizon we more than once saw craft

passing under easy sail, but the breeze that bore them on never reached us.

From murmuring, the crew became clamorous; so, yielding to their entreaties, and being perhaps a little impressed or scared himself, our skipper ordered the mysterious boat to be shoved overboard and cast adrift; and heavily, with a thundering plunge, she fell bow-foremost into the glassy sea; but by that power of attraction which larger bodies possess over smaller in the water, she lay close to the ship, and jarred there with every roll she gave on the long oily ridges that swelled up from time to time.

"Three days followed, and still no wind.

"In vain the captain whistled and consulted the dog-vane; in vain the first mate blew up a feather, and cast bits of burnt wood over the side, to watch which way the stream went.

"Some urged that we should sink the boat by scuttling her; but at last Harold Trænaldson, an old Orkney whaler, red-faced and yellow-bearded, from the Isle of Stronsay, said, openly:

"'This will never do, mates; there's one aboard of us with human blood upon his hands, and the mark of Cain upon his brow, though we can see neither. So here this ship will float, mayhap, till doomsday, for who ever heard of such a calm in these seas?'

"So, in five minutes after this, we were all casting lots at the capstan-head.

"Three times we drew, and three times the fatal lot fell upon me.

"Denial, threats, and entreaty were alike vain. I was roughly hustled overboard into the enchanted boat. Two biscuits, a bottle of water, and an oar were given me, and I was peremptorily ordered to shove off and scull to a distance from the ship, which I was supposed to pollute by my vicinity, and was mockingly desired to keep company with Mother Cary and her chickens, Mr. David Jones, and the Flying Dutchman.

"With a heart bursting with mortification, rage, and many real and imaginary fears, I sculled the heavy boat away from the ship, and, strange to say, in ten minutes after I felt a coolness in the air and saw a catspaw on the water. Gradually it freshened. A breeze came—a breeze at last!

"The sails of the whaler filled; topsails and courses were sheeted home; up went jib and spanker; the ocean began to ripple under her bluff, iron-plated bows, and the crew gave me a cheer of derision, while my poor heart died within me, as she stood away upon her course to the whaling-ground, and ere the sun set, had disappeared, leaving me alone upon the gloomy North Sea.

"I shall never forget, Mr. Ashton, the horror of feeling myself marooned in such a craft, and under such an accusation; and such is the power of imagi-

nation, that, as the boat rolled and lurched on the waves of the dark and midnight sea, I almost fancied that I could see, between me and the stars, while crouching in the bow-thwarts, a huge shadowy figure, like the Spirit of Destruction, which haunted the boat of Ronald of the Perfect Hand.

"But when day dawned I saw the rocks of Balta, the most eastern of the Shetland Isles, shining redly at the horizon, and soon after I was picked up by the *Thorson*, a Danish galliot, bound for Leith, where I was safely landed a few days after."

"And the whaler?"

"She and her crew were never heard of again. So whether she had really a breaker of the commandments on board, or whether the boat of old Magnus Sigurdson, of Scrabster, wrought the mischief, I cannot say. I only spin the yarn as it occurred to me. Strike the bell there, Gawthrop."

"Aye, aye, sir," growled old Noah, who had been dozing astride the spanker-boom.

"Call the next watch; it is Captain Bartelot's, and now, Mr. Ashton, 'tis time for you and I to leave the deck, and turn in."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RIO DE JANEIRO.

On a gorgeous tropical morning, when the *Princess* was nearing her destined port, and when Morrison declared that already he could see the "land-blink" in the sky, Morley watched with some interest the result of what is termed in nautical astronomy, "taking a sight," or "making an observation," by noting the altitude of any heavenly body, in order to estimate the latitude and longitude.

"What is the time?" asked Bartelot.

"Twelve, sir, by the sun," replied Morrison.

"And by the chronometer?"

"Twelve."

"Then bring me the correct latitude, while I calculate the longitude. I have had a capital sight to-day."

He then relinquished the quadrant, and proceeded, compass in hand, to "prick off," as the sailors term it, the ship's place upon the chart.

Looking the while at a large chart of the Southern and Northern Atlantic, Morley asked:

"Where should a vessel, bound for the Mauritius, be now, if she left London at the same time I said the *Hermione* would sail?"

"Always the same thought, Morley?" said Bartelot, looking up with a smile.

"Well, Tom?"

"If winds are fair, and all went well"—at these words Morley gave a sigh of anxiety—"she should now be here, about St. Helena, or a few miles to the southward, and off the African coast."

"And we are how far from that?"

"Farther than I should like to fly, Morley."

Poor Morley sighed again, and looked eagerly at the chart; thereon, by three spans of his hand, he could compass the world of waters that lay between him and Ethel Basset.

On the 6th July, the *Princess* was in latitude 19 deg. 57 min. south; longitude, 37 deg. 48 min. west; and Cabo Frio (or the cold cape of South America) bore about forty-five miles to the westward.

They were drawing very near Rio de Janeiro, and many ships bound for the same quarter were in sight daily.

The trade-wind continued steady and fine; Morley looked with keen interest on the ships that veered from time to time in sight. Among them all, might be one that would have a freight for the Isle of France.

To search for such was to be his first object and occupation on landing; and worthy Tom Bartelot assured him that money should not be wanting to further his double purpose of joining Ethel and punishing Cramply Hawkshaw.

"But, ah, Tom," said he, on one occasion, "how, or when, is a poor devil such as I to repay you?"

"Think of that when the time comes," said Tom, laughing.

About 10 A.M., on the morning of the 9th, the look-out man, old Noah Gawthrop, who was in the forecrosstrees, sung out, in his queer voice:

"Land a-head!"

"Where away?" asked Morrison, jumping off the companion seat.

"Land on the starboard bow, sir," added Noah.

Morley's heart leaped at the sound, and the telescopes of Bartelot and Morrison were speedily levelled in the direction indicated.

"It should be Cabo Frio," said the Scotchman.

"And Cabo Frio it is!" added Bartelot, emphatically. "Look, Morley, that is the great headland on the coast of Brazil."

"It was there the *Thetis* frigate was wrecked in 1830," added Morrison; "she had lost her reckoning, on a dark December night, and was borne more than twenty-four miles to leeward by the current."

"Then we shall see Rio to-night?" said Morley.

"No, no; Rio lies sixty-four miles beyond the Ilha de Cabo Frio—the cold cape, rather a misnomer in this season, at least," replied the mate.

"Steward, bring up the case-bottle; let the men forward have each a tot of grog, while we'll have a glass below on the head of this."

"Head of what, Tom?" asked Morley.

"Scenting the land, to be sure," replied Bartelot, as the three descended to the cabin.

"You are a clever seaman, Tom, and have made the land to a minute, at the time you foretold a week ago."

Bartelot laughed, and said:

"Father wanted me to go into the navy, where he said I was certain to shine, as I never was out of scrapes and turmoils at school and at home; but I had no ambition. What does old Topham's song end with?" and pouring out his grog, Bartelot began to sing:

"'Ambition, they tell me, has charms for us all,
But well I'm convinced they are charms that must pall;
The pageant of splendour may lure for a while,
But soon we grow sick of its weight and its toil;
Nor can it compare with us, Morley, my boy,
Whose appetites strengthen the more we enjoy.
Then deign ye, kind powers! with this wish to comply—
May I always be drinking, yet always be dry!'"

After the long voyage, sixty-four miles from the

Cabo to Rio seemed a trifle to Morley. He strove to be thankful and content in his heart, that the first portion of his watery pilgrimage was nearly accomplished, and that he had now attained what was rather more than the beginning of a future end.

By 5 P.M. they were within seven miles of the land, and the rocky Cabo, a vast insular mass of granite, which terminates a long range of mountains, was glowing redly in the light of the Brazilian sun. The highest summit there has an altitude of more than 1,500 feet; the sea and sky around were both serene and beautiful.

The water possessed a strangely pure and crystalline aspect; so much so, that at times the bed, or what appeared to be the bed of the ocean, was visible, but this was only the flowers of the sea.

Long and mysterious plants (the *Nereocystis*), which, with a stem no thicker than a spunyarn, grow from their roots in the deep bed of the ocean to the length of 300 feet and more, and have at their upper end a huge bulbous-shaped vesicle, filled with air, which floats upon the surface, or near it, and from this bulb there springs a thick crown of dusky leaves.

These tremendous marine vegetables are more commonly found on the north-western than on the eastern shores of America, but many are to be seen at times off the coast of the southern continent.

Elsewhere Morley's eye could discern masses of rock or coral reefs, that rose to within fifty or sixty feet of the surface, showing a freight of shellfish, sea-anemones, wondrous creeping things, and fibrous tufts of giant seaweed.

But the scene changed with tropical rapidity, when with midnight there came on sudden black squalls, with heavy rain, deep hoarse thunder, and vivid red lightning, that seemed to flash and play about the granite summits of the Cabo Frio with a brilliance that eclipsed the gleam of its lighthouse, which marks now where our frigate, the *Thetis*, perished.

Bartelot reefed his fore and mizzen topsails; but when the weather faired he shook out the reefs again. He set his main topgallant-sail, mainsail, and jib, and the rising sun that gilded the mountains which bound the plain of the Corcovada saw the *Princess* running fair into the lovely bay of Rio de Janeiro, with the British ensign flying at the peak, her private colours at the foremast-head.

Now were heard the rattle of the chain-cables, as they were hauled up from the tier, laid along the decks in French-fake, that is, in lines all clear, and bent to the working anchor.

The harbour of Rio, one of the finest in the world in size and form, stretches twenty nautical miles inland, widening to the breadth of eighteen miles at its centre. On its western slope stands the city of

Rio, or, as it is sometimes called, San Sebastian, crowded with magnificent edifices.

The entrance to the bay from the ocean is bounded at its southern extremity by the Pao d'Asucar, or sugarloaf, a conical mountain, more than 1,200 feet in height.

On the northern side the ocean rolls in snowy foam against a mighty rock of glistening granite, at the base of which stands the castle of Santa Cruz, with a triple platform, from which 120 pieces of cannon point towards the sea.

Looking beyond this entrance, the bay is seen to be studded with little isles, nearly eighty in number, clothed with glorious verdure, brilliant with fruit, giant flowers, and wondrous foliage, though here and there the grim muzzle of a cannon shows where a battery is built, and among these isles a fleet of small steamers are always puffing and gliding.

Beyond all this and around it—a new scene, indeed, to Morley—the great mountains of the new world rise in a thousand fantastic forms, covered to their summits with wood, forming a vast amphitheatre around Rio de Janeiro, the City of Palaces, a title which it well deserves.

Morrison, who had been getting the cable clear, and the anchors hoisted over the bows, now came to Morley's side, and pointed out the church of Nossa Senhora da Gloria, on the lofty hill that juts into

the sea, between the city and the Praya de Flamengo; and then indicating the castle, on which the gaudy flag of the Brazilian Empire floated, he said, in his deep Scotch accent:

"In 1515, where that great castle stands, there stood only a wooden fort, built in that year by Juan Diaz de Salis, to be a place of refuge for Protestants, and forty years after they named it the Castle of Coligni; but the Portuguese came upon it in the night, and put every living thing in it to the sword. It was Juan Diaz who gave the place its name, Janeiro, as his ship ran into the bay in the first days of January. A wild place it must have been then."

"Hands prepare to shorten sail—stand by the anchor!" were now the orders of Bartelot.

The canvas was clewed up preparatory to being handed, and the light warm breeze from the wooded shore swept through the bared rigging and spars.

Already the seamen were hurrying up aloft; the small bower anchor was let go with a plunge; hoarsely rushed the chain-cable as it vanished from the deck through the hawse-hole; and now the *Princess* rode at her moorings in eight-fathom water, in the noble harbour of Rio de Janeiro—the region where eternal spring and endless summer reign.

And now, leaving Morley Ashton to push his way among the skippers and merchant-officers in the

Rua Direta, and all its branching streets, seeking a mode of transit to the Isle of France, while Tom Bartelot sends his crew ashore, and procures a copper-coloured gang to "break bulk" and start his cargo, we shall return to Ethel Basset, whom we left five chapters back, with her quondam lover, on board the *Hermione*, of London.

CHAPTER XIX.

ETHEL AMID THE ATLANTIC ISLES.

Unlike the *Princess*, which, as we have shown, accomplished a most prosperous voyage, the *Hermione* encountered a series of head-winds and hard gales; she had several of her spars carried away, and even before skirting the Bay of Biscay, had to put in requisition her spare foretopmast and topsail yards.

This was considered by all on board a singularly unlucky beginning, as Captain Phillips said; all the more so, that a pair of sparrows had built their nest in the forecrosstrees, during the time that the ship lay in the London-dock, and had finished it, too, undeterred by all the noise and bustle around them.

This was considered so good an omen, that the event was actually recorded in the ship's log; biscuit crumbs were scattered in the tops for their support, and orders were given not to disturb the birds, if possible, so they went to sea with the ship. So the female sat upon her eggs, while the

male hopped and twittered about the top and below in search of the scattered crumbs; but in the first tough breeze, as some ill-disposed fellow—supposed to be Pedro Barradas—was going aloft at night, the nest was destroyed, and flung with its two little eggs on the deck; the poor birds were swept away to sea, and hence, as Mr. Quail affirmed, came the ill-luck, the head-winds and hard gales, encountered by the ship.

After passing the Madeira Isles her foremast was carried away, and at the very time when Tom Bartelot was informing Morley Ashton that she should be somewhere off St. Helena, the *Hermione* was creeping slowly under a jury foremast into the harbour of Teguise (the chief town of Lanzarota, one of the Canary Isles), to refit; and there the dockyard appliances were so small and so poor, that she was delayed for more than a fortnight.

Mr. Basset took Ethel and Rose to a posada in the town, where, though the accommodation was miserable, as usual in all Spanish posadas, it was a vast relief, after the discomfort, circumscribed space, and monotony of the ship, to tread on *terra firmâ*, under the cloudless sky of the Canary Isles, and to see the sheep, and goats, and camels, too, browsing in the grassy pastures.

The inevitable Hawkshaw, glad, for certain cogent reasons of his own, to keep clear of the

ship, or, at least, of its crew, of course accompanied them, as Mr. Basset's guest.

It should have been mentioned that when the captain came on deck next morning, after recognising Pedro Barradas on the yard-arm overnight, so complete was the change in his costume and toilet, that scarcely anyone knew him.

His thick, luxuriant brown beard, and most cherished moustaches, were shaved clean off; his hair, of which he had a great quantity, was now shorn quite short. In lieu of the scarlet tarboosh, in which he had been hitherto wont to figure, he wore a white wide-awake; and his military boots, with brass heels, were exchanged for a pair of white shoes with yellow soles.

For the natty, short sack-coat, and Spanish sash beneath it, a surtout and vest of most ample and business-like cut had been substituted. On the whole, his *tout ensemble,* if less picturesque and striking, was infinitely more respectable.

"Lor' bless me!" exclaimed old Nance Folgate, terrified to meet on the companion-stair a man whose eyes and voice she alone could recognise.

Captain Phillips and Mr. Basset laughed heartily at the change; even Ethel smiled, and Rose made great fun of it; and it was soon remarked that, with his hirsute appendages, the *ci-devant* captain relinquished all his South American reminiscences,

the Spanish interjections and Yankeeisms, with which his conversation had been so fully flavoured hitherto—a change greatly for the better.

Hawkshaw pleaded the heat they were soon to encounter as a reason for his new toilet, though they were scarcely clear of the "chops of the Channel." For many weighty reasons, best known to himself, he kept a nervous watch upon Pedro and Zuares Barradas; and the appearance of either of these seamen coming aft, to take the wheel, or perform any other ship's duty, sent the Texan captain below, with a celerity and abruptness which was so often repeated, that there were times—especially when he was conversing with the young ladies, Mr. Basset, Captain Phillips, or Dr. Heriot—that it became so strange as to excite remark, though no one could have understood what his conduct meant.

The rough weather encountered by the *Hermione* after leaving the British Channel afforded ample excuses for remaining below; but how to avoid his dreaded South American acquaintances during the months of a protracted voyage he knew not, and he felt the wretched conviction that it was impossible!

Whether it was a dread of some destructive revelation, or whether his growing love for Ethel had somewhat purified this luckless and guilty fellow's mind, we know not; neither can we say whether he

repented the terrible past, as that could be known to Heaven and himself only. It is very possible that he may have felt alike repentance and remorse, with gleams of hope for the future, as no human character is so utterly bad as to be without one redeeming point at least.

"No time," says Robert Burns (in one of his unpublished letters preserved at Edinburgh), "can cast a light further on the present resolves of the human mind; but time will reconcile, and has reconciled, many a man to that iniquity which at first he abhorred."

The appearance of Zuares had even a more exciting effect on Hawkshaw than that of Pedro.

Zuares, the unwitting matricide of the Barranca Secca, was a more youthful but equally picturesque-looking ruffian. He was decidedly handsome, with well-cut features; his eyes and nose were very fine; but he had a cruel and savage mouth, which he inherited from his Mexican blood.

It seemed the very machination of Satan, or of a retributive destiny, that, after he had so fearfully rid himself of Ashton, now placed him in the same ship with these two men.

If seen by them, if known and recognised, he felt himself lost with Ethel, Mr. Basset, and all on board.

Should they meet him face to face, he dare not

decline their recognition, and with that recognition the assumption or resumption of an old and insolent familiarity, from which he had everything to dread, and from which he shrank instinctively now.

Poor wretch! his position was far from enviable.

He felt conscious, probably, that he had led a wild and reckless, a wandering and unprofitable life; but softened now by his regard for Ethel Basset—though even that regard was full of self-interest and selfishness—he mentally resolved that, if he were spared from this disaster, this hourly terror of exposure, and if he escaped the toils and perils in which those Barradas could involve him, that he would turn over a new leaf, and be for the future a better man.

"Ah, these new leaves!" exclaims Digby Grand; "if the half of them were turned over, what a gigantic volume they would form in the life of many of us!"

With this resolution, perhaps, he strove to soothe the remorse, or guilt, he felt for the outrage on Morley Ashton. It was not his first crime, probably, nor the first time he had taken the life of a fellow-creature in some fashion.

"Barradas—Barradas!" he never ceased to mutter. "How the wheel of fortune turns! What fiend brought us together again? But fate is fate, and there is an end of it!"

Consequently, right glad was he to avail himself of a fortnight on shore at the Canaries, till the *Hermione* was reported ready for sea, and had the blue peter fluttering at her new foremast head.

Rose found, in the Canaries, and boat visits to Santa Clara, Aleguenza, and Graciosa (three islets adjoining Lanzarota), and to the old Spanish Castle, which, in 1596, the Earl of Cumberland assailed at the head of 600 men-at-arms, ample materials for the diary she was keeping; and Ethel wrote letters to the Pages, and other dear friends at Acton-Rennel, dated from the Posado de St. Iago, opposite the Canal de Bocagna, detailing the terrors and dangers they had undergone, in such exaggerated terms as young ladies generally resort to when excited, or fired by a desire to run into flowery description.

A fine day in July—but all days are fine in that region, save those of October and November—saw the *Hermione* entirely refitted, her spars and hamper all a-taunto, under a heavy press of sail, once more at sea, and leaving the Cape of Mascona rapidly astern, while the sharp cone of Teneriffe rose as rapidly from the ocean on her weather-bow.

For some time after this the voyage was truly delightful, and, as Mr. Basset had anticipated, the change of scene and of air acted most beneficially on Ethel. She was in excellent medical hands, too;

for young Dr. Heriot, though more disposed to be attentive to Rose, was unremitting in his care of Ethel, to whose pale cheek the colour was gradually returning.

The atmosphere, especially in the evening, under the quarter-deck awning, was charming, and a day seldom passed without something occurring to break the monotony of the voyage.

The Canary Isles were passed in succession; one day they had a glimpse of Africa, about twenty miles distant. It was the great headland forming the extremity of Jebel Kahl, or the Black Mountains of Sahara.

Low, and dim, and distant looked that little strip of blue coast. How strange to think it was a portion of that vast continent of perils and wonders—the land of Park, Lander, Livingstone, Speke, and Grant!

After leaving the Canaries they had a tedious calm for nearly three days—a fresh delay.

The ocean was still as the waters of an English mere in summer. The sails hung straight and motionless upon the yards, though the ship kept sheering round from time to time, her bowsprit pointing to all the points of the compass in slow succession, and occasional swells that heaved slowly up and sunk noiselessly down in the glassy sea, jerked the neglected rudder and its wheel a few inches to and fro.

Ethel and Rose sat reading under the awning; the doctor was fishing over the taffrail; the mates were forward superintending the men, who were busy cleaning the forecastle.

Captain Phillips sat somewhat moodily on a spare topsail-yard, that was slung alongside, smoking, with his short fat legs dangling over the water, and his eyes fixed on the horizon, as if he was waiting to *see* the coming breeze.

Tempted by the heat, Manfredi was about to strip for a bathe about the ship's bows, when the Yankee, Bill Badger, who was busy painting the grating of the head-boards, sung out:

"Take care, mate! for here comes a fellow that 'ud gobble up the prophet Joaney. Once in his ballast port, I calculate you'll never be a capting, Mr. Manfreddy. Blowd if I don't get a harpoon, and have a shy at the beggar!"

"Look, Miss Rose," cried Captain Phillips, from his perch on the spare topsail-yard, "there goes a sea-lawyer."

Rose looked at her papa and laughed, while the ship's cook threw over a piece of rancid pork, with a sharp skewer in it, for mischief, as there is a natural antipathy between Jack Tar and Jack Shark.

The shark—a white one—turned on his back, and the piece of pork that floated steadily on the oily sea vanished into his capacious maw, the opening

and shutting of which made the girls shudder, and old Nurse Folgate, who was knitting beside them, utter a "Lor' a mussy me!" with great earnestness.

Hawkshaw hoped the heat might tempt either of the Barradas to take a bathe alongside, but they were much too cautious to do so.

"How horrible!" said Ethel, as the monster sailed away, with his black triangular fin erect.

"A fellow like that would dart at a man in the sea, and snap him up as a snipe would a fly," said Dr. Heriot. "I have heard, Miss Basset, of the master of a Guinea ship, among whose cargo of slaves there prevailed a strange rage for drowning in the belief that, after death, they would be restored to their native country, their tribes and wigwams; to cure them of this, or to convince them that they could not reanimate their dead bodies, he ordered one, a gigantic negro, who had died at a ring-bolt, to be towed overboard by the heels at the end of a line. A shark rose. In an instant twenty men tailed on the rope to haul the body in, yet that instant did not suffice. The shark devoured every morsel save the feet and ankles, which were tied by the end of the rope."

One day a whale rose suddenly, about a quarter of a mile from the ship, and brought a shriek of dismay from old Nance Folgate, who clung to Manfredi, the Italian mate, on seeing it floating

steadily, like Sindbad's island in the sea; and still greater was her terror when he spouted a cloud of water in the air, stuck up his flukes, and went surging down with a sound like a roar to the depths below.

On another day there came a shoal of porpoises from windward of the ship, rushing in madlike and headlong career.

On they come, on and on, surging, rollicking, flashing in the sunshine, as they leaped from one bank of water to the other, all keeping time in their ocean race, all going together, and all crossing the ship's bows in one frolicsome shoal. So close do they pass that their little red eyes can be seen twinkling and glancing; and away they go, surging and leaping on towards the far horizon, till they are lost or blinded amid "the grey and melancholy wastes" of ocean. It is always on a breezy day that these living shoals are seen. Rose clapped her hands, as if at a horse-race, when they passed.

"You English call them porpoises, from our Italian term, *porco-pesce*," said the soft voice of Manfredi; "but is it not strange, Mees Rose, that they do go so very fast with only three fins?"

"Only three, Mr. Manfredi?"

"Yes; one on the back, placed rather below the middle, and two on the breast—no more."

But greater was the excitement when a water-logged vessel, whose deck was almost flush with the

sea—a brig which the waves of some mighty storm had swept of everything from stem to stern, so that the stumps of her two masts, and a few weather-worn timber-heads, alone were visible above her planks—was passed, drifting, silent and alone, about two miles to leeward.

The melancholy object excited, of course, much remark, and made Ethel and her sister weep, and speculate upon the probable fate of her crew, their story, and the story of that poor deserted ship, to the rusty chain-plates of which the barnacles and seaweed clung, as it drifted away into the wastes of sea and sky; and Ethel thought of the oft-quoted words of the Psalmist—words she had heard again and again in the old church at home:

"They who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the mighty deep."

Dr. Heriot, who was a very enterprising young man, Hawkshaw, and Manfredi, proposed to have a boat lowered for the purpose of visiting the wreck, and ascertaining her name; but the *Hermione* was running free, under a press of sail, and Captain Phillips and Mr. Quail flatly refused permission; so that the old wreck was rapidly dropped astern.

On the warm summer Sunday mornings, when the quarter-deck—that looked so very small when they came on board at first—got an extra drench-

ing, holystoning, and swabbing; when the running rigging aft was more neatly coiled over the belaying-pins, and between the four six-pound carronades; when the binnacle lamps and other brasses had received an extra polish; when camp-stools, cushions, and hassocks were brought from the cabin, and "a church was rigged;" when the somewhat motley crew assembled in their cleanest attire, and stood by, bareheaded and respectful (to all outward appearance), to hear jolly Captain Phillips read the grand and impressive service of the Church of England, with Mr. Quail, the first mate, or Dr. Leslie Heriot, acting as clerk, making all the responses; while the great ship, with her vast spread of white canvas bellying on the wind, and shining in the sun, with the British flag flying aloft in honour of the day, though no other eyes could behold it, save those in heaven; when all this took place weekly, we say, Ethel was indeed soothed and charmed by the solemnity of the scene, upon that illimitable world of waters, and her thoughts naturally reverted to the gray old house of God at home, with its Norman spire and Gothic porch, the pew where last she had sat by the side of Morley Ashton, and then she seemed to see the old yew-tree that cast its shadow on her beloved mother's grave—the grave which lay in that dear English soil she never more might tread, never more might see.

CHAPTER XX.

MOONLIGHT ON THE SEA.

At such times as the Divine service on Sunday, when there was a great muster of the crew, Hawkshaw always remained below on one pretence or other, unless he had assured himself that his two *bêtes noires*, the Barradas, were neither at the wheel nor in "the church," which was so easily improvised upon the quarter-deck.

On these occasions, it was observable that Rose Basset and the young Scotch doctor always read from the same book.

This did not fail to attract the notice of Captain Phillips, who, being unable to resist a joke thereon, gave them once or twice a remarkably knowing wink; in the very middle of the service he was reading so solemnly, a proceeding which very much scandalised Mr. Samuel Quail, and made Rose colour and glance nervously at her papa.

And there was one Sunday when, after prayers had been read, the crew dismissed forward to smoke, sing, or mend their clothes, as usual on Sundays,

and the passengers had assembled in the cabin for lunch, he proceeded to quiz poor Rose and the doctor, by offering, in his "double capacity of skipper and parson, to perform a Scotch marriage for them on the high seas."

Rose reddened again with so much real annoyance at this broad jest, that Captain Phillips offered a species of salt-water apology, which rather made the matter worse; so the handsome young doctor blushed too, all the more so, perhaps, that his soup was scalding hot, and the thermometer on the bulkhead stood at eighty in the shade.

"After the rigs I have seen run by those who live by salt water," continued the jolly captain, "I have always thanked my stars—wherever they may be—that I am still a bachelor; yet had I, in other times, met such a young lady as you, Miss Rose, mayhap I'd have struck my colours and changed my mind—who knows? But perhaps things are best as they are."

"You should be ashamed of saying so, captain," said Rose; "and I am certain that some one has missed a good kind husband, through your mistake."

"Mayhap, miss, mayhap; but 'tis too late now for old Jack Phillips to 'bout ship, and make a fool of himself, by hauling up for the gulf of matrimony."

"Gulf? Fie, captain!" exclaimed Rose; "you should call it a bay, or happy haven."

"Do you know, captain, how they treated old bachelors in Sparta?" asked the doctor.

"Stopped their grog, mayhap, or keel-hauled 'em, I shouldn't wonder."

"They were stripped of their clothes, and in the coldest days of winter were forced to run through the principal streets, chanting songs, full of sharp sarcasms upon their own condition."

"Deuced hard lines, doctor; was there any other nice little thing they made us do?"

"Yes," resumed the doctor, furbishing up his Scotch latinity to punish the captain for making Rosa blush, "Athenæus, the grammarian of Naucratis——"

"My eyes! there's a name to turn in of a night with!"

"Well, he tells us that there was, every year, a laughable festival celebrated in a great temple, at which all the bachelors of a certain age were compelled to attend, that the ladies might taunt, mock them, and slap their faces as much as they pleased."

Honest Phillips rubbed his curly head, the brown hair of which was becoming thickly seamed with gray, slapped his sturdy thigh, and burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Overhaul the charts, Quail, and see where this same Sparta lies. Its latitude and longitude won't do for me, Sam. Another glass of wine, ladies, and

then I must be off to relieve the deck, and let Mr. Manfredi down."

The night that followed this day was peculiarly lovely—lovely even beyond what night is in the tropics at times.

Mr. Basset, the captain, Mr. Quail, and the second mate were having a quiet rubber in the cabin; Hawkshaw had fallen asleep on one of the lockers, or pretended to do so; Rose and Dr. Heriot were promenading the deck aft the mainmast, in very close conversation, and Ethel was seated alone near the taffrail, at the stern of the *Hermione*, which was gliding through the water with an almost imperceptible motion, for the wind was light and steady.

She was alone, for no one was near her, save the man at the wheel, Zuares Barradas, who seemed oblivious of all save his duty. The light of the binnacle lamps fell steadily on his dark olive face, his bare neck, arms, and breast, on which the figure of a Madonna had been graven with gunpowder, on the rings in his ears, and on his black, glittering eyes.

The ship had her three courses, top and top-gallant sails, royals, and lower studding-sails set; and this vast cloud of canvas shone white as snow in the moonlight, the bellying curve of every sail being beautifully and softly rounded into shadow by the chastened radiance, and with every heave she gave

upon the long glassy rollers, the reef-points pattered like a shower upon the taut and swollen bosom of the sail.

Star after star twinkled out and was lost, and then seen again under the arched leach of each square of canvas, as the ship rose and fell with each successive heave. Forward she was sunk in silence; the watch were clustered in a group near the chocks of the long-boat or main-hatch; the rest of the crew were all seated together about the windlass and forecastle-bitts.

Nothing broke the silence, save Mr. Basset's voice, or Captain Phillips's laugh, in the lighted cabin, the occasional rattle of the rudder in its case, the wash of the passing sea under the counter, or the gurgle of the long wake astern, that seemed like a path of green fire amid the eddying bosom of the deep, the unfathomable deep, that held, as Ethel believed, the remains of him she loved and mourned, as a widow, in her heart of hearts.

Full of thoughts of home, of sadness, and of the past, Ethel reclined against the taffrail, with a heart inspired by deep and indescribable emotions; and her dark, swimming eyes wandered with admiration over the phantom-like outline of the vast white ship, gliding in awful silence unerringly over the solitude of the broad ocean, beneath the mighty dome of the star-studded sky.

Her thoughts were finding vent in tears, when she found that some one was near her. Passing a handkerchief across her eyes, she drew her cloak closely round her as this person came forward, and politely touched his cap. It was Manfredi, the handsome and pleasing young Italian mate.

"Pardon me, Miss Basset," said he, in his distinct yet somewhat broken English; "I have been observing you for some time, and am very sorry to see you so *triste*—so sad."

"I was not sad, Mr. Manfredi."

"Oh yes you were," said he, with smiling earnestness.

"The great beauty of the night impressed me. To you, perhaps, it may be little worth noticing after the skies of your native Italy."

"The skies are clearer here than in Italy; the air is purer and freer," he replied, with a sad smile.

"When so far away, do you never wish for home?"

"I did so once."

"And now?"

"I have no home, save on the sea."

This was said with such a melancholy and pathetic brevity, that Ethel gazed at the young man inquiringly, but in silence.

"I had a home in Italy once, madam—a home, though humble, as happy, perchance, as yours in

England; but the Austrians came and brought death and sorrow upon it, so I turned my back on the place where the olives and acacias grew before my father's house, and returned there no more."

"The Austrians," repeated Dr. Heriot, who, with Rose leaning on his arm, had now joined them; "we, in England, occasionally heard of great outrages committed by them."

The black eyes of Manfredi sparkled, and a sigh escaped him.

"Mr. Manfredi is sighing," said the heedless Rose; "depend upon it that love has something to do with his memories of Italy."

"You mistake, madam," said the third mate, with a smile at the lively girl, whose fair English face and fine merry eyes looked so beautiful in the moonlight, that the younger Barradas at the wheel regarded her more than his compass, so that frequently the sails shivered aloft, and he was somewhat wild in his steering; "my memories of Italy are, many of them, pure and charming, as if love formed a portion of them; and yet I wish all these memories to die together."

"What kind of paradox is this, my dear Manfredi?" asked Dr. Heriot.

"It is no paradox."

"We have a Scottish writer who says that 'No thought, no delightful memory, ever dies; it may

remain silent for a season, but it will come from those inexpressibly deep regions of memory; it will come at some time to brighten the present, and to brighten the recollection of the past.'"

The face of the young Scotchman flushed as he spoke, with Rose's pretty hand trembling on his arm; but the Italian only smiled sadly, and said:

"You mistake me, doctor. The pure and tender memories of my home are so inseparably blended with the sad and bitter, that I have no desire but to forget them altogether, for the former add but poignancy to the latter. Surely you must have heard the story of my brother, little Attilio Manfredi, whose assassination was termed the great crime of the House of Hapsburg? As such it went the circuit of the English newspapers, which received the story from the *Monitore Toscana*, whose sheets were under the revision of the assassin, the Austrian commandant."

After a silence of a minute, for the Italian seemed labouring under deep emotion, Dr. Heriot said:

"No; I do not remember of this, Manfredi."

"Pray tell us about it," said Rose.

"Pray do," added Ethel.

"Wait, ladies, please, until the wheel is relieved, and I shall tell you a sad but simple tale of barbarous cruelty."

A tall, rawboned Yankee sailor, with a hooked

nose and villainous square jaw, now relieved Zuares Barradas, who civilly touched his hat and went forward, just as the whist-players came on deck, and proceeded to exchange tobacco-pouches and light their pipes.

Immediately on discovering that the helmsman was changed, Hawkshaw appeared on deck and joined the group, to whom Manfredi proceeded to explain what he meant by relating one of the darkest stories that ever disgraced the pretty voluminous annals of continental military tyranny.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORY OF A BRAVE BOY.

"In 1850," began Adrian Manfredi, "I was, with my elder brother Attilio, a schoolboy at home, in our father's house at Pistoja, and had no more idea then of becoming a seaman or a wanderer on the sea, than I have now of filling the chair of St. Peter.

"Our father was a sculptor; his studio was always filled with choice efforts in Tuscan and Carrara marble, in alabaster and chalcedony. He was a leading member of the Academia delle Belle Arti: but in that land of artists his means were small; hence our living was frugal and our house somewhat humble, because it was very old, being the same in which Pope Clement IX. was born.

"My brother Attilio was said to be as beautiful as an angel by all the mothers of Pistoja. Indeed, he was a very handsome little boy, and frequently served my father as a model; thus Attilio's figure appears in more than one of the groups which he contributed to the Great Exhibition at London in 1851.

"Versions of my brother's story have already, as I have stated, appeared in the English newspapers. I now propose to tell you *mine*.

"Pistoja, our native place, is a Tuscan town, situated amid a fertile country, at the base of the beautiful Apennines. In fancy I can see it still, with its carved cathedral of snowy Carrara marble; its convents and hospitals; its quaint streets of the middle ages; its old and crumbling walls, that were built by Didier, last king of the Lombards, and the clear blue waters of the Ombrone, bordered by chestnut groves, and lands that teem with corn, wine, and oil, all reddened in the setting sun, as I saw them last; and that feature, the blot and blight on all the rest, the accursed Austrian eagle, that floats above its ancient fortress.

"Yes, Pistoja, like too many other Italian towns, had or has an Austrian garrison, and, at the time I refer to—the first months of 1850—all Europe was filled with ardour, interest, and sympathy by the gallant stand made by the Hungarians, under Kossuth, and other chiefs, against their imperial oppressors; and nowhere did their victories and their downfall find a more ready echo than in the hearts of Italians.

"The boys of the Academia de Pistoja, which my brother Attilio and I attended—he was then twelve, and I but ten years of age—held a jubilee with

others, on an evil day, when fresh tidings of some new battle came. We received a holiday. I went to fish in the Ombrone, and my brother returned home.

"When, chancing to pass near the palace of the Bishop of Pistoja, where the Austrian commandant, Colonel Count Rudolf de Veinrich, had quartered himself (after expelling our venerable prelate), Attilio saw a number of soldiers in what he considered the Hungarian uniform—brown tunics, embroidered and faced with red.

"When passing the first sentinel, Attilio lifted his little hat and cried:

"'Viva Kossuth! Viva Hongria!'

"'Viva!' replied the sentinel, whose comrades joined in the cry, adding:

"'Eviva—bravo Hongrie!'

"Thus emboldened, the rash boy continued to wave his hat and shout the name of Kossuth.

"'Come hither, boy,' cried the soldiers, in strange Italian; 'we wish to speak with you.'

"Attilio, believing that he beheld the countrymen of the Hungarian dictator, approached, but was instantly surrounded and seized, and then, to his astonishment, he found himself in the hands of a party of Croats, whose uniform, in his ignorance of such matters, the boy supposed to be Hungarian.

"They were proceeding to drag him into the

guard-house, when Attilio, active and nimble, glided like an eel through their hands, sprang from an open window and escaped, but was closely pursued.

"Fearing to take shelter in our house, which would implicate our innocent parents, and insure their ruthless pillage, he left the town behind him, and fled, bareheaded, towards the woods. As it chanced, he came close to where I was fishing in the Ombrone.

"'Change jackets with me, Adrian!' he exclaimed, 'the Austrians are after me—change, but ask no questions.'

"We exchanged in a moment; my jacket was black, and his a bright green; thus, when he disappeared, the Croats came upon me. I uttered an involuntary cry of real terror as they seized me, and handled me very roughly before they discovered their mistake.

"Then I laughed at them, on which they spitefully broke my rod, and seized my fish basket, with its contents. A closer search was instituted for poor Attilio, and at night he was dragged from our dear mother's arms, and reconducted to the guard-house, where he was brought before Count Rudolf de Veinrich, colonel of the Regiment de Radetzki.

"Knowing well the kind of hands he had fallen into, Attilio gave himself up for lost; yet he was brave as a lion; his courage never deserted him,

and, in contempt of his captors, he spat upon the Austrian flag that hung over the guard-house door. Yet he wept, when in the dark, for the mother from whom he had been torn—the poor little boy of twelve happy years!

"I may mention that though, like the Italians, the Croats generally profess the Catholic religion, in the military portion of that semi-barbarous race there is a strong element of the Greek schism, and of this last was the Regiment de Radetzki composed. Its soldiers had all the worst qualities of the Croat; they were revengeful, deceitful, intemperate, prone to robbery, and officered by Germans, who, when in Tuscany, cared little to restrain their licentiousness.

"Their colonel, notwithstanding his title of count, was a man without family or friends, save such as position gave him, without kindly sympathy or common human feeling. His mother had been found speechless and dying near the new Scottish gate of Vienna, and she expired soon after in the Allgemeine Krankenhaus, or great infirmary of the city, leaving her child to the foundling hospital, by the name of Rudolf.

"Ten years after a person of rank, a prince of the Russian Empire, on searching the books of the said hospital, discovered in this foundling his own son, the mother being a hapless Polish woman, whom he had deluded and abandoned; so the little Rudolf,

on the payment of so many thousand ducats, became a count, and in time rose to the rank of colonel of Croats; and, as such, exercised the stern military laws of Austria with unexampled severity.

"On bringing my brother before him, the Croats charged Attilio with attempting to induce them to desert in the name of Kossuth; and then with defiling the flag of the Empire by spitting thereon.

"'Did he attempt to seduce you by money?' asked the colonel, with a frown on his face.

"'Yes, Herr Colonel,' replied a corporal named Schwartz, and he produced eighteen *quattrini*, which he had found in the pocket of my jacket, and which were in value about twopence British.

"On this the colonel, undeterred by the manly aspect of the beautiful little boy—for my brother Attilio was beautiful—struck him with his gloved hand, and with his sheathed sword, repeatedly.

"He then ordered him to be put into one of the dark, damp, and horrid dungeons of the old castle of Pistoja, where, among the rats, the toads, the gloom, and the cobwebs, the poor boy wept for his parents, and for me; wept in cold and forlorn misery, on some wet straw, near which a clay pitcher of water was placed.

"He had a stone whereon to rest his head if

weary, and his right wrist was fettered by a chain to his left ankle.

"'Sono desolato! Sono perduto!' ('I am ruined! I am lost!') he kept repeating from time to time.

"Our father was crushed with grief, our mother was filled with wild despair, and I was stupefied!"

"And they dared to seize him thus?" exclaimed Mr. Basset, flushing with indignation like an honest John Bull, while vigorously polishing his forehead with his silk handkerchief; "a frightful outrage on the rights of the subject! Where were the police? Where was that great bulwark of liberty, the writ of *habeas corpus?*"

Manfredi smiled sadly, and replied:

"You forget that I am talking of Tuscany?"

"True, my dear sir, true; but go on."

"The poor boy!" said Ethel, mournfully.

"Those odious, hateful Austrians!" commented Rose.

"D——n them!" was the addendum of Captain Jack Phillips, while Manfredi resumed:

"In this horrible condition, crushed for a time in body and in soul, and drowned in tears, he remained, while all access was denied to him, even to our parents; but ultimately he was found by the good Padre Marraccini, who had come to visit the sick prisoners, and who, by chance or mistake, was

shown by Corporal Schwartz into the atrocious dungeon where our poor little Attilio lay.

"Undeterred by the grim Croat, who carried a smoky lamp, the light of which scared the rats and toads, who were seen hurrying away to their dark and slimy recesses, the child leaped up with a cry of joy, and hastened towards the padre, who was our father's friend, but in hastening fell, for his chain was short, and cramped the action of his limbs.

"'Water, Padre Marraccini!' he exclaimed hoarsely, 'water; for I am dying of thirst, and they have *salted* what is in that pitcher.'

"With great difficulty the commiserating padre procured him some water in the hollow of a broken bottle; the corporal would give nothing else, and it cut the poor boy's mouth, so that he drank his own blood, his tears, and the water together.

"'My mother, my father—are they well?' he asked.

"'Yes.'

"'It seems so long since I saw them—the day before yesterday when I went to school,' continued Attilio, weeping, with his head on the padre's shoulder. 'And Adrian, my brother—did they hurt him, for he changed jackets with me?'

"'Hush!' said the padre, glancing at the stolid Croat who stood by them, with a lamp flaring in

one hand, and his drawn bayonet glittering in the other.

"'Get me out of this, Padre Marraccini; pray get me out of this place, and home to my mother. Oh, my mother! my mother!'

"'I will, dear Attilio, I will—that is if I can.'

"'I shall take courage. I shall be a man!'

"'Do, until I return from the commandant.'

"With dire forebodings in his heart, the poor old padre hastened to the count, whom he found seated at his wine, after dinner, with several Austrian officers, in the saloon of the bishop's palace.

"After enduring considerable annoyance—even insult—from the Croatian sentinels and German lackeys—insults which he endured with contempt, perhaps, rather than with meekness, and feeling himself the servant of a higher master than even the Emperor of Austria—he was admitted to an audience, and he begged—he dared not, in such a presence, demand—'the release of the child Attilio Manfredi, who had been seized by the soldiers of the garrison.'

"'Seized, Fra Marraccini, for attempting to seduce them by money to desert their colours, in the name of the rebel Magyar, Kossuth,' replied the count, sternly.

"'Term it as you please, Signor Excellenza. I

implore you to allow me to restore him to his parents—his heart-broken mother especially.'

"'It cannot be; his case is not in my hands.'

"'In whose then?'

"'It has been remitted to the general-commanding at Prato.'

"'And the answer will come——'

"'About midnight,' interrupted the count, with a dark glance there was no misinterpreting. 'Enough, priest. You may go.'

"The poor priest felt his soul sink within him. Instead of seeking our parents, to whom, knowing the Austrians as he did, he could give no hope, he returned to the castle, and sought to prepare the unhappy child, my brother, for the fate, the great change, that was to follow.

"All day had elapsed without food passing the boy's mouth, and he was in such a state as to be incapable of swallowing the coarse cake which the priest had procured with difficulty from the Croatian guard.

"Attended by the corporal, named Schwartz, who remained persistently in the dungeon, holding a lamp, the priest sat on the damp stone, with Attilio on his knee; and resting his head caressingly on his shoulder, besought him to make his confession, in the fashion of our church—to speak in whispers, lest the Croat might overhear and mock them.

"But the confession of a boy—a mere child, so pure, so good, and sinless, could interest the soldier but little, and the youthful prisoner made it with charming artlessness; though his large dark eyes began to dilate with mournful anxiety, fear, and wonder, and then to sparkle with courage and sublime resignation, as Fra Marraccini spoke to him in earnest whispers of his spiritual state, beseeching him to think of hopes beyond the grave, of the Father he had in heaven as well as his father on earth, and of the Blessed Madonna, who was the mother of all good children.

"Then the little boy began to see clearly the terrible meaning of the priest, and though his heart yearned, and his tears fell fast when he thought of his poor mother who was on earth, and whom he never more should see, at length he became pacified, or worn out by emotion, and fell asleep in the arms of dear old Father Marraccini.

"So the hours stole on, Corporal Schwartz trimmed the lamp, growled and swore, tugged his obstinate moustache, and smoked his huge meerschaum, while the old priest, heedless of his impatience, read the prayers for the dying with the child asleep upon his knee.

"The galloping of a horse was heard, and the clank of a sabre, as an Austrian dragoon passed the grated window of the prison.

"'Poor Attilio!' groaned the priest.

"'Rouse the prisoner!' croaked the corporal, harshly, 'here comes the final order about him!'

"At that time the clock of the fortress struck midnight.

"Prato is only six miles from Pistoja, so the general there had not hurried himself.

"'They are not really going to kill me, Fra Marraccini, are they? Oh! my sweet mother! Oh! my dear father! and my little brother Adrian, too, shall I never see you any more?' exclaimed Attilio, as he was dragged out by the guard.

"'Remember what I have said and taught you,' whispered the priest; 'take courage, and be a Christian.'

"'Yes, padre, and a Tuscan, too!' replied Attilio, as they were conducted from the dark passages and vaults of the ancient castle into one of the dry ditches, where the moon was shining in all her brilliance—yes, gloriously, as now she shines upon this tropical sea.

"There, between the high walls of the dry ditch, were several Austrian officers in their white uniforms, with long boots and black varnished helmets, surmounted by plumes or spikes, and double-headed eagles, and all apparently flushed with wine.

"Beyond them were twelve Croats under arms, drawn in a single rank across the ditch.

"'Corporal Schwartz,' said the count, as he opened a letter, 'unlock the prisoner's chains.'

"As they were taken off and flung rattling aside, the courage of Father Marraccini rose.

"Bareheaded before this imposing group, whose breasts were covered with imperial orders and medals, stood Attilio, with his dark eyes cast down, his crossed hands on his breast, humble, but courageous.

"'He looked so fair and handsome!' says the kind padre, in an account he wrote of this affair. 'The moonlight silvered him from head to foot, and made him look like an angel. The boy was very sad, but at the same time calm. No entreaty passed his lips to be allowed to look once more upon his parents' faces. All he said was, "Don't leave me any more—oh! see to what a pass they have brought me!"'

"'Priest, bring the boy forward,' said Count Rudolf, imperiously.

"Marracini did so, and so clear and bright was the moonlight, which poured aslant over the grand masses of the ancient castle of Pistoja, on the glittering arms of the ferocious-looking Croats, on the white uniforms and glittering accoutrements of the Austrian officers, and on the boy's pale face, that the count could read distinctly, as if at noon-day, the brief but pompous despatch of the general commanding at Prato.

"'Attilio Manfredi,' said he, 'listen! Your sentence has come hither in German, but I shall read it to you in Italian.'

"The boy bowed, played nervously with his hands, and said:

"'Dio il voglia, Signor Colonello—se piace a Dio!' ('God willing—if it please God!')

"'Attilio Manfredi,' resumed the tall Austrian, raising his voice with a hiccup at times, 'scholar of the Academy of Pistoja, son of Adrian Manfredi, sculptor, and member of the Academia delle Belle Arti, you have been accused and fully convicted of attempting, by bribery, to induce Corporal Carl Schwartz and Private Demetrius Spitzbübbel, with other soldiers of Veltmarshal Radetzki's Croatian Regiment, to desert the fatherly and benign service of his Imperial Majesty Ferdinand I., Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, Bohemia, Lombardy, and Venice, Dalmatia, Crotia, Sclavonia, Galicia, Lodomeria, and Illyria——'"

"Dash my wig!" exclaimed Captain Phillips; "why did he omit the Cannibal Islands, and the Viceroy Whanky-fum?"

"Count Rudolf paused to draw breath, as well he might after such a mouthful of words; and again the fine large eyes of the boy dilated with wonder, at a list of names that sounded so strange and barbarous to his Tuscan ear.

"'Have you the courage to hear your sentence?'

"'Si, signore; the blessed Madonna, who is alike the mother of my mother and me, support me!'

"'She does, my son!' cried Marraccini, with enthusiasm.

"'Silence!' exclaimed the count. 'Prisoner—you are to be shot to death by a platoon of twelve men.'

"He deliberately folded the despatch and drew back.

"'The mother of God receive me!' murmured the poor boy; then he added, in a feeble voice, 'Father Marraccini, when it is all over—when I am dead—cut off three locks of my hair: one for my dear father, one for dear, dear mother, and one for my little brother Adrian.'"

Here Manfredi drew a locket from his breast and kissed it.

"'You will keep my crucifix for yourself, in memory of your little penitent, and say masses for his soul.'

"It was now the old priest's turn to weep, and he wept aloud, while the brave little Attilio had not a tear in his eye.

"Hoarse, and harsh, and rapid were the German words of command, and in less than three minutes, a volley of twelve rifles that rang like thunder on the still midnight, waking all the echoes of the

fortress and of the silent streets of Pistoja, announced that all was over—that the great crime had been committed!

"In five minutes more Attilio was flung into a hasty grave dug in the ditch beneath the castle wall, quicklime was cast over him, and there, uncoffined and unconsecrated, the Croats covered him up.

"My poor little brother!

"My father and mother could not survive the shock of this atrocity. They both died soon after; I was left alone in the world, and, turning my back upon Pistoja, became a sailor and a wanderer.

"A wooden cross nailed on the castle wall, by the kind hand of Fra Marraccina, marked the uncouth grave of my brother till 1860, when the ecclesiastical and civic authorities of Pistoja took heart, and, with many grand and empty ceremonies, exhumed his sad remains, and reinterred them in a coffin within the church of the Confraternita dei Dolori, where they now lie, and may they rest in peace! *

"Fra Marraccini, now Bishop of Pistoja, performed the funeral mass, and wrote me all about it when I was far away, a merchant seaman, in the Southern Pacific. The good man sent me his blessing, and it reached me even there."

* For the truth of this story, see the *Athenæum* of 1860.

As he concluded, the Italian crossed himself, and stepped aside, as if to light a cigar; but Ethel Basset and others knew, by the tremor of his voice, that he had turned to hide his emotion.

"And this cruel colonel—this Austrian," she asked, "what became of him?"

"The curse that fell on Cain followed *him*. He died, not on a gallows, as he deserved, but fell beneath the Danish rifles, at the foot of the Dannewerke," replied Manfredi, with flashing eyes; "and now I am Christian enough to say: may he, too, rest in peace, even as my brother rests at Pistoja."

CHAPTER XXII.

ZUARES AND THE SHARK.

The voyage of the *Hermione* had now lasted several weeks.

During that time Hawkshaw had never ventured to resume the subject which Ethel had so summarily dismissed on that evening in Acton Chase—the evening which had an end so fatal—the subject of his passion for her, and certainly, as such things grow and mature by propinquity, it was more deeply rooted now than it was then.

He was wisely and sedulously attentive during their daily and hourly intercourse in the circumscribed space on shipboard—attentive, but nothing more.

Yet Ethel knew well what those delicate attentions inferred, and shrank from them systematically and intuitively, and in such a manner, though quiet and gentle, as to give the persevering ex-captain of Texan troopers not the shadow of a hope for the future.

Moreover, he was rather galled to perceive that

ever since that evening when Morley Ashton disappeared, Ethel had adopted a nun-like soberness of attire and colour that reminded one of mourning. Save Morley's engagement-ring, she wore no ornament, and Hawkshaw knew that to the black ribbon around her neck was attached a locket, with a braid of Ashton's hair entwined with her own, on one side, and on the other, a miniature of herself, for it was the same locket which he had worn when in Africa, and which she had found lying on his toilet-table on the morning after his mysterious disappearance and supposed death.

She knew that he had always borne it next his heart, and now she resolved it should ever be worn next her own; for with such things do lovers solace themselves.

Hawkshaw knew, we say, quite well, that the black ribbon around that white and slender neck sustained that which she deemed an affectionate memento; so he never dared to ask her what it was, lest its production should serve as a curb and rebuke to himself; and while it was worn thus, he deemed it almost hopeless to resume the task of entreating her to love him, or permit his loving her. So day followed day, and still the great ship that bore them all flew on, but not always successfully, for she encountered such a succession of headwinds, as served almost to prove the truth of what our old

friend Bill Morrison, of the *Princess*, stated to Morley, about a ship that had a "shedder" of blood on board; and now, even jolly Captain Phillips lost his temper with his mates, his crew, himself, and everybody but Rose Basset, who, he was wont to say, "could wind him round her little finger like a bit o' spunyarn."

Though the *Hermione* made long tacks westward and eastward, on the latter sometimes "sighting" the coast of Africa, and though the winds were ahead, and fearfully protracting the voyage, the weather was very fine, almost to monotony, and thus for days after the moonlit evening on which Manfredi told his tale, nothing occurred to disturb the even tenor of the voyage, save the usual sights to be seen at sea.

A drove of porpoises dashing in the wind's eye; a shower of silvery flying-fish crossing the vessel's course, and falling in hundreds, like a glittering torrent, into the sea, from which they had sprung; the stormy petrels tripping gracefully with brown wings outspread, above the snowy spray, or the black fin of a shark prowling for offal in the vessel's wake astern; and once a sucking-fish was seen fixed to the rudder, where it remained for weeks, wriggling and twisting, for no amount of motion in the water, not even the waves of the wildest storm that furrows up the sea, can shake it off when once

it adheres to a ship's bottom, to a whale, or a shark, as it is sometimes wont to do.

Captain Phillips was not superstitious enough to believe that this small parasite retarded the progress of a ship, though such has been for ages the idea of those who live, and have lived, by salt water, as we may find in many

> "——a book,
> From Captain Noah down to Captain Cook,"

but more especially in the works of many who have written of nautical phenomena between the days of Pliny, Plutarch, and Captain Dampier. Yet to watch from the taffrail its obstinate adherence and wriggling, amid the foam down below, was for some time an amusement which duly found a record in the journal or diary which Rose kept for the special perusal of her friend Lucy Page when they met again.

On another day a ship was passed, "bound for Europe"—they had ceased to speak of Britain now—and all crowded to the side to hear her hailed. On she came, and each vessel backed her maintopsail and showed her colours, plunging stern down and head, their cutwaters dripping with foam, their bright copper, that rose to the bends, flashing in the sun, the sails of the stranger shivering, as the *Hermione* kept the weather-gauge of her.

"Ahoy!" came faintly from a trumpet over the sea; "what ship is that?"

"The *Hermione*, of London—two months out—bound for Singapore. What ship are you?"

"The *Robert Bruce*, of Glasgow, bound for Europe."

"Where from?"

"Batavia."

"Report all well."

"Aye, aye; good-bye."

Then the latitude and longitude, chalked on a black board, would be shown over the quarter of each ship; the colours were dipped at the gaff-peak, the yard-heads filled, a parting cheer exchanged, and each left the other to plough through the waste of waters, and each, ere the sun set, would be "hull down" to the other, at the horizon.

Then Rose hurried to her desk to record this trivial, but, to her, important episode; but, alas! events were soon to occur which would make her diary, if kept amid them, the most startling work of the kind ever penned by a human hand—especially a hand so small and so pretty as hers.

That the young Scotch surgeon, Dr. Leslie Heriot, was very much captivated by Rose was evident to all in the cabin; but Rose was so accustomed to have plenty of admirers to talk to, laugh, and flirt with, when on shore, that to have an acknowledged

dangler on board ship seemed nothing unusual, and she accepted his attentions accordingly.

She conceived it to be a penchant that had begun with the voyage, and would end with it; but, being less volatile than she was, to our young M.D. and F.R.C.S. of Edinburgh, it was a passion deeper than she thought, and of that she was to have ample proof ere long.

Whether it was that the irritation always consequent to headwinds extended from the occupants of the after cabin to those of the forecastle bunks, we know not; but about this time a very perceptible difference began to manifest itself in the tone and conduct of the crew towards the passengers —towards each other generally, and the officers of the ship in particular; in short, a general insolence of bearing, to which the latter had been quite unaccustomed.

We have stated that they were a mixed crew; that the coloured, the foreign, and the Yankee elements largely predominated among them; hence, they were not the kind of men to stand upon trifles.

Thus, when two had their grog stopped for insolence to Mr. Quail when ordering them to work the spun-yarn winch, they drew their knives, and swore they "would have blood, if not their Jamaiky rum;" and so menacing generally was the conduct of the rest, that Mr. Quail was polite enough to

content himself by entering in the ship's log a threat he affected not to overhear, and gave the mutineers their grog two days after, when both got three tremendous sousings, when ordered to "lay out forward and furl the gib."

The watch on deck at night went sometimes to sleep, committing the care of the vessel to the winds and the man at the helm; and, as he occasionally chose to nod also at his post, the *Hermione* was thrice thrown in the wind, hove flat aback with all her studding-sails set, and fortunate it was that, on each of these occasions, the wind was light, or some of her masts would have gone by the board.

Sailors are never idle when at sea, as a ship perpetually finds work for every hand at all times, were it only to "polish the chain-cable;" but the crew of the *Hermione* were resolutely slothful.

By day, the men who lounged about the forecastle bitts, or stood in a row with their backs against the bow to leeward, exchanged strange cries, whoops, signals, and scraps of low ribald songs with those who were engaged aloft, or elsewhere; and more than once the man at the wheel ventured to do so likewise; and when told by Captain Phillips never again to come aft the mainmast, or appear on the quarter-deck, he very deliberately spat thereon, and told him that he and his quarter-deck might both be—not blessed at least.

These unusual indications were quite enough to cause alarm, and a day seldom passed that Captain Phillips, Mr. Quail, and his three mates, did not confer about them, or exchange glances, the anxiety and import of which Mr. Basset and his two daughters knew nothing.

The captain dreaded that this secret spirit of disorder might develop itself in scenes of outrage when the old, and now almost disused, ceremony of receiving Neptune and crossing the Line took place. To ignore the occasion might cause discontent, and to celebrate it might provoke what he feared; but, fortunately, for twenty-four hours, about the time of crossing the equator, the wind blew almost a hurricane, so Neptune and his visit were alike forgotten.

There was one occasion on which Hawkshaw hoped to get rid, at least, of one of his chief sources of dread—the Barradas.

There fell a dead calm one day about noon; the air was almost suffocating, the sea like glass or oil, and there was not a breath of wind to stir the canvas, or even to wave the scarlet fringes of the quarter-deck awning, under the shade of which Ethel and Rose reclined languidly, with light summer dresses, and fan in hand.

It was strange that with this listlessness below there seemed to be aloft a current of air, which did

not descend even to the skysail-yards, but played with the vane and its scarlet streamer on the main-mast-head.

On this day the *Hermione* was about a hundred miles to the northward of St. Helena. The air was thin and ambient; the sunlight, broad and blazing, exhaling from the sea a thin white haze, which, at the dim horizon, made the sea and sky so blend together, that none could tell where cloud began and water ended.

Through the glassy surface of the still, calm sea the black crooked fin of a great shark was seen, as he glided stealthily alongside, preceded, as usual, by the long, wriggling pilot-fish.

It was evidently a white shark, by the mode in which he swallowed; for when the cook cast some offal to him, he turned on his back, and opening his dreadful mouth, exhibited his six-fold row of teeth, triangular, and sharp as razors. This terrible apparatus for mastication is quite flat in the mouth when the shark is in a state of quietude; but when biting or swallowing food, it has the power of erecting it with vast power, by the enormous muscles of the jaw.

The whole body being of a light ash colour, his grim form, with the motion of his pectoral fins, could be distinctly seen, as he floated alongside, or glided to and fro.

Now Zuares Barradas, a daring and athletic young fellow, stripped of everything but his canvas trousers, appeared suddenly in the starboard fore-chains with a coil of rope in his hand, and a murmur almost rang along the deck, as he made one end of his coil fast to a belaying-pin, preparatory to plunging into the sea.

"Oh, Mr. Quail!" exclaimed Ethel, "is he about to fish for that dreadful thing?"

"No, miss," replied Quail, quietly; "he is going to attack it."

"Attack it?"

"Yes, in the water. Shouldn't care if a few more tried the same game," growled the mate.

"Is it not rashness—madness? So handsome a young man, too," continued Ethel, greatly excited.

"It is rashness and madness too, as you say, Miss Basset."

"You will prevent it, surely?"

"By no means. The weather is warm; if he wants a dip, let him have it," replied the mate, who had not forgotten that Zuares was one of the men who had drawn his knife when his grog was stopped.

Before he could be either warned or prevented, the younger Barradas sprang into the jolly-boat, which had been alongside for the carpenter, who

had taken advantage of the calm to perform some piece of work upon the outer sheathing.

Shoving off to the full extent of the painter, Zuares stood for a moment in an attitude which showed his handsome, athletic, and tawny form to great advantage, and when the horrible shark came within six yards of the boat, rising at the same time so near to the surface that his gray body shone through the pea-green sea, as if scaled with gold and silver, a cry of terror burst from Ethel Basset, as Zuares plunged headlong into the water, within three feet of his jaws.

Turning instantly, the shark shot towards his expected prey, who rose near his tail, and, on the shark turning again, dived once more beneath him, with a skill and courage he could only have acquired on the half-savage shores of his native country.

All on deck beheld this strange and perilous game with breathless interest, and even the ruffianly crew were hushed into silence by a scene so unexpected.

Thrice the ill-matched antagonists appeared on the surface, Zuares swimming with the hand he had at liberty, and keeping the other, with the coiled rope, behind him on his loins, the shark following, but warily, as if in doubt. Each time Zuares got breath he dived headlong down, and on the third

time, the monster dived after him, so closely and so simultaneously, that not a doubt remained in the minds of those who lined the ship's gunwale that they had encountered below, and that the bubbles, now rising fast to the surface, would soon be tinged with blood.

Even the swarthy visage and beetling brow of Pedro Barradas grew pale; and his present emotion found vent in a heavy curse.

Ethel and Rose covered their faces, and sank down on the quarter-deck seat. Nance Folgate gazed steadily at the place where the shark and seaman had disappeared, and continued to utter a series of noisy outcries, and "Lor' a mussy me's!"

Five, ten, fifteen, twenty seconds elapsed—they seemed an age; then suddenly the slack of the rope at the starboard fore-rigging was seen to tighten and pay out.

"Tail on—tally on—yeo-heavo!" was now the cry, and a dozen pairs of strong hands were pulling at it, and meeting, apparently, with a resistance that threatened to snap the rope.

At that moment, Zuares Barradas, panting, breathless and weary, rose to the surface at some distance, and swam leisurely towards the boat, while the shark—round the tail of which, and the small back fin that is close thereto, he had, in some fashion known best to himself, contrived to loop the

rope tightly—was drawn, ignominiously and in great wrath, tail-foremost from his proper element.

A hurrah, rather varying in its cadence, as it did not come from British throats, greeted the monster's appearance as he floundered alongside, with his head downwards, and his awful jaws rasping and scraping in impotent fury against the ship's outer sheathing.

Up, up he was hoisted tailwise; then the carpenter, armed with his hatchet, descended into the fore-chains, and put an end to his power, by severing the spinal column, after which Jack Shark was cut adrift to perish, and amid great exultation the intrepid Zuares was hauled on board.

His right arm was severely lacerated and bleeding; but this, he stated, was done by one of the monster's fins, and not its jaws.

Handsome though the young fellow was, Ethel and Rose beheld him more with fear than admiration, for his feat savoured of a courage that was reckless or diabolical.

"True," said Dr. Heriot, aside to Mr. Quail; "a fellow who sets so little store upon his own life will set still less upon ours."

Although Captain Phillips would, perhaps, have felt small regret had Zuares shared the fate of the Prophet Jonah, he ordered the steward to give him a good tot of grog, and ere long, as the breeze

sprang up and sail was made on the ship, nothing remained of an adventure so exciting, but an entry made very briefly by Mr. Quail in the ship's log :—

"4 P.M., *calm. Zuares Barradas caught and killed a shark.*

"6 P.M., *steady breeze; people employed in shifting the foretopsail and slushing the mainmast. Pumps attended to as usual.*"

The pumps and the foretopsail were evidently of more importance to Mr. Quail than the shark and its story.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HAWKSHAW'S OLD FRIENDS.

One day, Ethel, inspired perhaps by Hawkshaw's evil genius, expressed a wish to go forward and see what she termed "the front part of the ship."

Her papa and Dr. Heriot were near; but as Hawkshaw had a jealous dislike of Heriot's attention to the sisters, and Mr. Basset had no desire to take more trouble than was absolutely necessary, the ex-captain drew closer to her, on which she said:

"Please take me to see it."

Hawkshaw, though he would almost as soon have walked into a furnace, gave his hand reluctantly to Ethel, pulled his newly-donned wide-awake down over his eyes, and led her forward from the sanctum of the quarter-deck.

Though in no way enchanted with her cavalier, Ethel, with a minuteness that, to him, was alike distressing and provoking, insisted on examining everything in this new region of the ship. The capstan, with its drumhead, pals, and bars; the

hatches, with their tarpaulins and iron bands; the long-boat upon its chocks, lashed amidships, full of hens, pigs, and all the *débris* of the deck; the cook's galley, with its hot, steaming coppers and tin pans; the skuttle-butt, from which the sailors drunk their water, by a long tin measure lowered through the bung-hole; the bowsprit, riding gallantly above the foam, with its perpendicular martingale for guying down the headstays, dipping in the sea from time to time; the catheads with their double sheaves; the windlass, the best bower anchor, and the sheet anchor; and last of all, she peeped into the forecastle bunks, a dreary-looking little den, in the berths of which a number of the ruffian-like crew were lounging, sleeping, and some, in defiance of all orders, smoking pipes and cigaritos.

So full of interest had the beautiful and intelligent girl been while exploring this new world, passing from object to object, stepping lightly and gracefully with her gathered skirts above her pretty tapered ankles, that some time elapsed before she perceived, that which the more wary Hawkshaw had from the first observed, the cool and deliberate insolence with which the seamen—so unlike British seamen—were observing her. They loitered or stood directly in her way, and, when she begged pardon or turned aside, they leered at her, thrust

their tongues in their cheeks, applied their fore-fingers to the side of their noses, whistled, and betrayed other and unmistakable signs of coarse wit or insolent admiration.

Ignorant of all this, poor Ethel continued to loiter among them, thinking them all very brave and fine fellows, though very dirty, and quite unlike William in "Black-eyed Susan," with his spotless trousers, tight at the waist and loose at the feet, his low-crowned, varnished hat, with its black ribbon, his dandy jacket, broad collar, and black silk neckerchief, with its peculiar tie.

The Barradas, Bill Badger, and Co., were the very antipodes of all this; but now the cook's galley interested her again.

"Oh, Captain Hawkshaw—the cat—look at the poor cat!" she exclaimed, as this useful domestic animal peeped at her from amid the cook's kettles.

"Well, Ethel, what of the cat?"

"See, what a horror it is!" continued Ethel, pointing to pussy, who had neither ears nor tail, and whose usually silky coat was coarse as that of a Spitzbergen bear, by almost daily immersions in the salt water of the lee-scuppers. "Captain Hawkshaw, tell me——"

"You must not speak so loudly, Miss Basset!" said that personage, with uncontrollable asperity

and alarm. "I am close beside you; and *others* will hear as well as myself," he added.

"Others, sir?" repeated Ethel, with astonishment.

"You were about to ask something," said he, with visible uneasiness and confusion.

"I was about to ask who had mutilated the poor animal so cruelly."

"How can I say? Some ruffian, no doubt. Come aft, and ask the captain about it."

"Lord love you, marm," said the cook—a greasy black fellow, who seemed to be in a perpetual state of steam, grime, and perspiration; and no wonder, when he had his blazing coppers around him, and overhead a tropical sun that melted pitch out of the decks—"there ain't no cruelty in this whatsomdever."

"What! no cruelty in mutilating the poor animal thus?"

"It's natur's wicious, marm," replied the cook, with great earnestness. "'Tain't lucky to have a cat aboard o' ship, or a parson neither, for the matter o' that. We can't dock the parson; but we docks the cat, as you see."

"Poor little pussy!"

"Poor! be darned, marm! I shears off the ears for'ard, and docks the tail aft, leavin' on'y the starn post; and so a cook's knife alters their appearance and their wicious nature entirely."

"What strange stuff is that you are cooking?"

"Scouse, for the fork'stle, marm; have a taste?" replied the cook, offering a huge dirty ladle, filled with a queer mess, to Ethel's lovely lip.

But she shrank back; so he poured down his capacious throat the scalding contents, which, in reality, was a savoury mess, composed of salt junk, chopped into small pieces, bruised biscuits, potatoes, suet and pepper, all stewed up together, and ready to be served up in the wooden kid for the ship's crew.

"Shall we go aft, *now?*" said Hawkshaw, with irrepressible annoyance.

"Yes, please," replied Ethel, hastening away, on finding herself the centre of what she deemed a curious, but which was in reality an impertinently admiring group.

And, grasping the belaying pins to steady her steps, she hastened towards the quarter alone, for Hawkshaw remained behind, paralysed, and almost cursing her in his heart, on finding himself confronted by the bulky form and lowering front of Pedro Barradas.

He saw that Ethel, alone and unattended, had reached a seat near the taffrail, and was now beside her father, Rose, Dr. Heriot, and some of the ship's officers; so he turned hastily away, seeking to get aft by passing between the foremast and the fore-

hatch; but there he was encountered by Bill Badger, the raw-boned, red-skinned, and ruffianly-looking Yankee, who said, while touching his hat in insolent mockery:

"Avast! I beg yer pardon, Capting 'Awkshaw, but haul yer wind. I calc'late there's a yellow cove as wants to speak with yer uncommon pertic'lar—one o' the not-to-be-done squadron."

Turning, with rage and desperation in his heart, Hawkshaw affected a calm exterior, and said, suavely, to Barradas:

"I believe you wish to speak with me, my good fellow?"

"Ha! ha! ha! *morte de Dios*; how well he does it!" exclaimed the black-whiskered Pedro, slapping his huge thigh with a great brown, hairy hand, and showing a row of strong white teeth that a shark might envy. "But it won't do, capitano—*caramba!* it won't do!"

"I do not comprehend you, fellow!" said Hawkshaw, with an assumption of dignity.

"Oho! hallo, mates, he doesn't comprehend. Shall I make him?"

"Aye, aye; pitch into the cork-sucker!" growled several of the crew, bent upon mischief.

"Step with me this way," said Hawkshaw, with growing perturbation, drawing Pedro Barradas towards the bow of the long-boat. "I assure you

that I am quite at a loss to know what you mean."

"Mean!" thundered the other, with a scowl on his dark visage, so terrible that Hawkshaw expected next moment to see a sharp knife glittering at his throat; "do you pretend to say that you have forgotten our old South American life, *camarado,* and how well you handled your lasso in the Barranca Secca, between Orizaba and the Puebla de Perote?"

"You are labouring under some strange mistake."

"If I were, would you take it so quietly, unless you were a coward? Mistaken! *Por vida del demonio,* I am not!"

"You are, fellow!"

"Oh, no, we are not mistaken," sneered the seaman.

"*We?*"

"Yes, we—Zuares and I. We knew you at once, and have known you ever since we cleared the Thames; so you may as well let your beard grow, and leave off skulking below when we take our trick at the wheel, or our spell at church on Sunday. You may as well leave off your blasted quarter-deck airs, too, for they won't go down with either of us."

"Scoundrel!" began Hawkshaw.

"Hah! is it to be *guerra al cuchillo* between us?" said the half Spaniard, touching his knife with a grim smile; "if so, *cuidar con el lobo!*"—(beware of the wolf.)

"Let me pass," said Hawkshaw, choking with rage.

"Not yet. I see you have still on your finger the ring we cut off the hand of the old padre, whom we lured into the Barranca, by sending, in the name of our Lady of Guadaloupe, a message that he must hasten to a dying man."

"Liar!" hissed Hawkshaw, while the crew drew nearer.

"He bent down to hear the confession of the expiring sinner—you, capitano—YOU, who sprang up and cut his throat. Ho! ho! Demonio, I knew from the first that we were *companeros de viage.*"

"Villain and fiend!" muttered Hawkshaw, while drops of shame and rage rolled over his damp, pale visage, and his hands longed to clutch the muscular throat of the brawnier, mocking, and malevolent Barradas; "villain and fiend! so you are here?"

"Yes, and Zuares, too, Senor Capitano, as you have known well by the skulking aft; so civility is best. Oh, neither of us have forgotten that pleasant afternoon which we spent together in the Barranca Secca."

"Was I to blame for your mistake, or your brother's crime?"

"Now, what have you to say that I do not denounce you to your fine friends in the cabin, eh? —particularly to that girl with the dark eyes.

Santos! what shoulders she has, such a bust and ankles! and then, there is that pretty little mina-bird, her sister, with the red cheeks and plump arms. It makes a fellow's mouth water to see them here upon the open ocean, so far from land—and help, eh, mates?—one would admire a coal-black negress here. And so you love the oldest one, capitano, eh?"

Hawkshaw drew back with indignant disgust at the idea of Ethel being referred to by such lips.

"Hah, did I sting you there?" resumed Barradas; "well, beware that you do not feel all the bitterness of losing her."

"Losing her?"

"Yes—before our ground-tackle is rove and ready. Take care," continued the mocking ruffian, "that you do not experience the bitterness of seeing a happiness that shall never be yours, *ours*. Harkee, *hombre*, can your fair ones swim?"

"Why?" asked Hawkshaw, mechanically.

"We meant to have had some fun with them when we crossed the Line, and shall have it yet. In their dainty white English skins—nothing else, remember—they will look uncommonly pretty floundering alongside, in the belly of a top-gallant studding-sail, won't they—eh?"

"You cannot mean—you dare not!" gasped Hawkshaw.

"Oh, don't be shocked, *companero*, before that comes to pass, you and some others shall have walked the plank, or been shot endlong, foot foremost, off a grating to leeward. Do you remember the Gulf of Florida, and what we did there to the mate of the *Polacca ?*"

"Will you keep silent ?" groaned Hawkshaw.

"Yes—if I am paid for it," grinned the other.

"Of course."

"But how am I to answer for Zuares, unless he is paid, too ?"

"Of course," replied Hawkshaw, utterly bewildered.

The storm so long dreaded had burst upon him at last; and this was all he reaped by the cruel manner in which he had supplanted Morley Ashton.

"Well, the *duros ?*" resumed Pedro, with a scowl, placing his hooked nose instantly within an inch of Hawkshaw's.

"I have no money."

"*Maldita !*" replied the South American, with a frown, "have you nothing ?"

"Absolutely nothing—but this watch."

"Let us see it—presto !" said the impatient Pedro, with an oath that made even Hawkshaw shudder.

Turning his back to the quarter-deck, the latter drew from his vest pocket, with a sullen, humiliated, and hang-dog aspect, a handsome gold watch.

"*Muchos gratias,*" said the mocking Barradas, with a grin, as he snatched it away with such force as to snap the guard; and then he thrust it into one of the pockets of his tarry trowsers, adding, "Now be off to your quarter-deck, and take care how you come forward again, *until you are wanted—vaya usted al demonio!* and the devil go with you!"

Barradas spat at Hawkshaw, with a scowl in his face, and turning away, walked to the forecastle, laughing.

A red blindness came over Hawkshaw, as if a crimson cloud enveloped him; he trembled in every limb, and his breath came in short painful gaspings. So black was his fury, that at first he thought of getting a revolver from his baggage, and shooting both the Barradas before the passengers and crew; but the fear of being instantly immolated by the latter restrained him, for he was a coward at heart, and one, moreover, who felt that he dared not die!

He was staggering, oppressed by hate, by rage, and shame, with the voice and mocking laugh of Barradas and his companions ringing in his ears, filling his tortured heart with bitterness and confusion, when suddenly several men on the weather-side exclaimed:

"A man in the water!"

"A dead body alongside!"

"Lay the ship in the wind!"

"Where away?" cried Mr. Quail.

"It's to leeward now. Bear a hand, boys; lower away the quarter-boat—stand by the falls."

This clamour, perhaps, arrested some immediate catastrophe, and gave a new current to the fierce emotions of Hawkshaw.

Though everything was set aloft that would draw or catch a breath of air, the breeze was very light, and all upon the starboard beam; thus the ship went very slowly through the water, with a steady but gentle heel to port.

Far away to leeward the western sun cast her giant shadow upon the sunny bosom of the deep, and it was in the midst of that shadow, about twenty yards from the ship, that the sad object was seen floating.

Soon it was abeam; then on the lee quarter, and soon astern, among the gold-tipped summits of the waves, as they rippled up in rapid succession beneath the passing breath of the light breeze.

Captain Phillips gave orders to lie to; so the mainyard was backed, and two of the crew, who owned the aristocratic names of Cribbit and Bolter, accompanied by Dr. Heriot, Manfredi, and Hawkshaw (who, after his late excitement, was anxious to do something, he knew not what), shoved off in the larboard quarter-boat, with four six-pound shots in a canvas bag, to sink the body after examining it.

A few strokes of the oar brought them alongside, scaring away a flock of Mother Cary's chickens that were hovering and tripping about it.

The body appeared to be that of a young seaman.

It was floating on its face, as all male corpses do when in the water, while those of females float on their back. How is it so?—let naturalists determine.

With his death-clutch his hands still grasped the lanyard of a life-buoy, from which the action of the weather had effaced the ship's name, and, as the poor fellow was minus a jacket, there were no pockets to search for anything that could lead to his identity. His dark hair rose and fell, floating on the water with every ripple that ran past him.

"He must have fallen overboard in the night, or belonged to some craft which has foundered in a storm that has not come our way," said Manfredi.

"Aye, aye," added Dr. Heriot; "some morning, perhaps the poor fellow little thought his soul would be required of him ere night; and little thinks some poor wife or sweetheart, mother or sister, that one they love is floating thus, so far from land."

"How long has he been in the water?" asked Hawkshaw, in a low tone.

"About four days, I think," replied Dr. Heriot, who, as he spoke, smartly lashed the bag containing the four six-pound shots to the feet of the corpse,

at the same time desiring Hawkshaw with a clasp-knife to cut away the lanyard of the life-buoy, which was grasped by the hands of the deceased.

Hawkshaw reluctantly and shudderingly obeyed.

Then, as the poor corpse began to sink feet foremost, slowly, solemnly, and gradually into the pale green and transparent sea, the head rose, nodding, but almost erect, from the water.

The face became visible in the glare of the setting sun, now almost level with the sea, and an exclamation of horror burst from Hawkshaw, as he fell backward over the middle thwarts of the boat, for in the ghastly lineaments of the sinking dead man, as the sea closed slowly over them, he seemed to recognise—oh, was it conscience, fancy, or reality? —the dreaded features of MORLEY ASHTON!

CHAPTER XXIV.

UP ANCHOR.

In all the fleet of merchantmen which crowded the busy harbour of Rio de Janeiro, Morley could not discover a single vessel bound for the Isle of France. There were hundreds freighted for Holland, the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, but not one for the island of his pilgrimage. So kind Tom Bartelot's generosity was proffered in vain, and for a time poor Morley was in despair!

To return to England merely to find that Ethel and her family had sailed at the appointed time, months ago, for the Isle of France, was a line of action to which he, by nature restless, impetuous, and impatient, could by no means reconcile himself to adopt.

He wrote to her a passionate and loving letter by the British mail, addressed to Laurel Lodge, to be forwarded after her, if she had left. In this letter he detailed the story of his disappearance, revealed the true character of Hawkshaw, and concluded

by declaring that, whatever happened, death alone would prevent him from finding his way to her before the year was out.

And this letter, which he knew might be months in reaching her, he dropped into the post-office in the Rua Dirieta, with a sigh of hope, and turned away sadly, again to seek the docks where the *Princess* lay, feeling oppressively in his heart that his youth was almost gone—his once bright, hopeful youth gone — and without avail. A bitter, bitter conviction!

His letter, penned at such a distance from her, in a humble little posada, frequented by seamen, in the Campo de Santa Anna, though duly forwarded by the mail from Rio to Liverpool (for reasons which the reader will learn ere long) never reached the hand of Ethel Basset.

This, happily for himself, Morley could scarcely anticipate. The return steamer from Liverpool would not leave Rio, he learned, until its usual day of sailing (the 29th of every month); thus he knew that the letter on which his very life seemed to depend would be lying uselessly in the mail-bag for nearly three weeks. Tom Bartelot urged that Morley should remain with him, and he, poor fellow, at present had no other resource, and no immediate views.

"One chance remains," said Tom: "the *Princess*

may get a freight for India or China, and, if so, it will go hard with me if I don't contrive somehow to get a sight of the Isle of France."

But this hope was speedily dissipated by the ship being chartered for Tasmania, or "Wan Demon's Land," as old Noah Gawthrop persisted in calling it.

Bartelot and Morrison were busy daily about the ship. Cast thus upon himself, Morley rambled listlessly about the streets of Rio, feeling downcast, forlorn, strange, and miserable.

The glorious climate, the endless summer, the wonderful fruits and flowers of the province, with the beauty of its capital city, alike failed to soothe, to charm, or to interest him, for Ethel was not there.

In vain he visited the gay and beautiful Rua do Ouvidor, the Regent Street of Rio, with its magnificent shops, some of which have their enormous windows piled with massive gold and silver plate, the produce of Brazilian mines, while others sparkle with jewels. He saw nothing to interest him in the quaint old palace of the Portuguese viceroy, and equally little in the noble residence of San Christoval.

In vain he ascended the lofty hill which is crowned by the Church of Our Lady of Glory, and saw, spread at his feet, the vast Bay of Rio, with all

its eighty isles and fleet of shipping, under steam, canvas, and bare poles; its verdant eminences, every one of which is crowned by a church or a convent, the surrounding mountains studded with villages and villas, and all this visible by the warm and golden light of a gorgeous Brazilian sunset in July.

There, on the western shore, rises the City of Palaces, where the early voyagers, 300 years ago, saw but a savage waste, a howling wilderness. What a change in the New World since these times, when, as quaint Richard Hakluyt informs us:

"Old Master William Hawkins, of Plymouth, a man esteemed for his wisdom, valour, experience, and skill in sea causes, much esteemed and beloved of Henry VIII., and being one of the principal sea-captains in the west port of England in his time, not contented with the short voyages commonly made then to the coasts of Europe, armed out a tall and goodlie ship, of the burthen of 250 tons, called the *Paul*, of Plymouth, wherewith he made three long and prosperous voyages unto the coast of Brazil—a thing in those days very rare, especially in our nation."

Great, indeed, is now the change, from those days when the *Paul*, of Plymouth, let go her anchor in the Ganabara Janeiro, as the bay was then named.

If a man wishes to kill time or bury care, few

places afford better means for doing so than Rio, where all classes of that mixed race which inhabit it have an unlimited love for mirth and pleasure; but in vain did Morley Ashton, to the utmost of his limited means, visit the opera, where the loveliest women of Brazil may be seen in full ball costume, seated in boxes that are without fronts, as in our European theatres; and alike in vain he sought the public masquerades, and those glorious gardens by the cool seashore, for he had but one idea, one desire, to see Rio sink astern.

In this public garden, which is laid out with wonderful taste and skill by a Scottish gardener, with enormous flower-pots, shrubberies, and parterres, with winding walks between, bordered by tropical trees, whose luxuriant foliage forms cool shades from the sun, are beautifully-formed alcoves of trellis work, painted bright green and gold, and over these are trained the gorgeous and odoriferous flowering plants of that lovely clime; and in these great bowers are nightly supper parties, lighted less by gas than by the moon or stars, where music, mirth, laughter, love, flirtation, and frequently dancing, make the night glide into morning unperceived; but of all this, too, did our lost lover soon weary.

To lessen his gnawing anxiety, to spend the weary time, to make himself useful, and in some measure,

by doing so, to repay, if only by mere manual labour, the friendliness of Tom Bartelot, Morley tried to become available on board the *Princess*, which was being rapidly got ready for sea, and he endeavoured to interest himself in all the details thereof.

Every huge round cask of sugar or tobacco that was lowered into the capacious hold seemed to hasten her departure, and every day that passed was reckoned by our lover as one less of absence from Ethel.

Ah ! if, after all he had undergone, he should only meet her to find that she was lost to him for ever ! But he thrust that idea aside, and, in spite of all that Tom Bartelot would say, he "tallyed on" at the rope, and "took his spell," like a veritable negro, at hoisting in the cargo.

A numerous gang of slaves, natives of Angola (for to that province the trade in "black passengers" is restricted in Brazil), sent by the merchant who had chartered the ship, soon accomplished this, and ere long the hatches were battened down, the tarpaulins spread over them, and the iron bands locked round the coamings.

Many of those slaves who worked on board were captured fugitives; and to Morley's European eye there was something strikingly repulsive in the iron neck-collars with which they were accoutred, like mastiff dogs, while others had masks of tin that

concealed the lower part of their faces, and were secured at the back by iron padlocks.

Yet these poor wretches were as merry as crickets withal, and tramped away with their bare black feet on the sun-blistered deck, keeping chorus and time to some uncouth ditty which they had learned in the vast forests of their native Angola.

In their activity, especially under the long lash of their broad-brim-hatted taskmasters, they formed a strange contrast to the lazy Portuguese, or Spanish South Americans, who lounged, or, to use a well-known western word, "loafed" about the piers and quays in the sunshine, clad in their coarse but brilliantly-coloured *surreppas* or blanket-cloaks, that hid their rags, or, it may be, nakedness below; their poncho wrappers, or *abarcas*, or leather leggings, wherein the dagger-knife was stuck, like the skene-dhu of the Scottish Highlanders—solemn, stately, and polite ragamuffins, always smoking, wherever or however got, a paper cigarito.

Slowly, slowly, to Morley Ashton, seemed to pass the hours of the insipid anchor-watch, when he performed that duty, with his eyes fixed on the countless lights of Rio, that shed long lines of tremulous radiance across the bay, and his thoughts, as ever, with Ethel Basset.

This is a small watch, composed of one, and, at times, of two men, who look after the ship while at

anchor or in port; and Morley was frequently so abstracted or taciturn that his watchmate or companion, when he had one, usually coiled himself up and dozed off to sleep under the counter of the long-boat, so our poor lover, when left in charge of the deck, always forgot to strike the bell, which it was his duty to do every half hour, as if the vessel were at sea.

On the 23rd July, after being thirteen days in Rio de Janeiro, the *Princess* was ready for sea, and blue peter flying at her foremast-head. The hands were all busy preparing for their new and long voyage; the royal-yards were crossed aloft; the chafing gear (mats or other stuff to save the rigging from being frayed) was shipped on the backstays, or wherever necessary; the last of the sea stores were taken in, and the studding-sail gear rove.

The carpenter gave the ship a final touch of paint all round, the standing and running rigging got their last overhauling, after the fag-end of the cargo, which was principally composed of tobacco and sugar, was hoisted in from a lighter alongside, and stowed away by negroes between decks; the last boat laden with water had come off and been hoisted to the davits, and about 4 P.M. Morley, with delight in his heart, heard Bartelot's welcome order:

"All hands stand by the anchor—ahoy!"

It was soon heaved up, and hung dripping at the

cathead; then came the next orders to set the courses, cast loose the topsails, jib, and staysails, to sheet home and hoist away.

Old Noah Gawthrop grasped the wheel, the sails filled, her head payed off, and the tall cone of the giant Pao d'Asucar, which was before astern, was now on the larboard bow, and the *Princess* began to leave the harbour of Rio.

In working out among the many isles which stud that magnificent bay, bracing the yards sharp to port and then to starboard every few minutes, a tug steamer nearly ran foul of her.

"Look out!" shouted the carpenter, who was probably thinking of his new paint, while assisting to get the anchor a-cockbill; "are your eyes no better than sojers' buttons, Noah?"

Old Noah, who handled the ship to perfection, disdained to reply as he looked grimly at the puffing, pursy tug; but, nevertheless, contrived to let the foreyardarm get foul of the foretopmast rattlings of an ugly, squat, hermaphrodite brig* which shot suddenly round the little isle of Paqueta, going at great speed, with a vast fore-and-aft mainsail.

"Hallo, Noah," cried Morrison; "are you playing at sojers with that wheel?"

"Are you going to sleep? Wipe your eyes with

* A vessel with a schooner's mainmast and brig's foremast.

the flying jib," added Bartelot angrily, while some men jumped aloft and got the hamper clear.

"Dash my wig!" growled Noah, "after clearing a dirty smoke-jack, to run foul o' that ere confounded butter-box! 'tain't like me, sir, 'tain't like me."

"I know it is not like your steering, you old Triton," said Tom Bartelot; "but keep a bright look-out for the next craft that comes near us, or your next glass of grog won't be measured by the rule of thumb."

Poor old Noah, who had been a man-of-war's-man, and served with the Black Sea fleet at Sebastopol, and who rather prided himself upon his steering, almost wept with shame and vexation. Spasms twisted his ancient visage, which was wrinkled like the kernel of a dry nut, and his grey eyes, the pupils of which were like herring scales, glared as he griped the wheel, with an air as much as to say:

"Thumb-grog or not, sir, pity the next craft as I runs foul on—damme!"

And here, for the information of the uninitiated in such matters, we may mention that the grog so specially mentioned, referred to that made for the watch who came below in the dark; it was measured by dipping the thumb into the can, to ascertain when it contained enough of rum before adding

water thereto; but, as the nights were often cold as well as dark, the regular old salt had usually no *sensation* in his thumb till the rum rose to the second joint thereof.

"'Twarn't my fault, sir!" resumed Noah, as Bartelot came aft; "that hermaphrodite brig don't answer her helm a bit—see how her mainsheet jibs."

"She is an old tub," said Bartelot, "and rolls at least twenty times per minute in a sea-way, or, like a crab, goes sideways, broadside-on, and any way but ahead."

"Shiver my topsails!" shouted Noah, with delight, "if she won't be bump ashore upon that blowed island of Packwetty, and sarve her right, too."

Contrary to his revengeful wish, however, the brig cleared it, and now the *Princess* soon passed the Castle of Santa Cruz, the giant rock of the Pao d'Asucar, after which she felt the full force of the sea breeze, and trimmed her sails on the starboard tack.

Morley was full of joy, and strangely excited.

The evening was a splendid one, and all the crew were in their summer gear—straw hats, white duck trousers, and flannel shirts of any colour they chose.

By 8 P.M. the coast of Brazil was many miles off, and all the outline of the land wore a deep blue indigo tint, against a warm sky of the most brilliant gold and burnt-sienna, that gradually turned to

crimson, as the sun set behind the mountains of the Corcovado, the Sugar-loaf, and La Gaviá.

The pharos at the mouth of the Bay of Rio was twinkling like a star that sunk at times amid the darkening waves, while, with night closing around her, the *Princess*, with royals and studding-sails set, bore swiftly on her course through the lonely waters of the Southern Atlantic Ocean.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SUSPICIOUS SAIL.

Though, to the impatient landsman, life on board ship becomes soon monotonous, to be once again at sea was soothing to Morley Ashton. He was not without imagination, and something of the poetic in his temperament; thus, when contemplating the ocean, he felt how much there is of the grand and sublime, the terrible and beautiful, the free and fetterless in it; and hence, perhaps, the great popularity of most tales, novels, and romances, which refer to that aqueous element.

Morley seemed to become a new man. With all his disappointments, he was too young not to feel the fresh impulses of youth strong within him; and thus hope seemed to come with the keen breeze that blew over the starlit sea, as he and Morrison trod the deck, keeping together the middle watch, which extends from midnight till four in the morning.

"There is," says one of the liveliest of our English writers, "a great feeling of freedom in being the arbiter of one's actions, to go where you will and when you will. The first burst of life is, in-

deed, a glorious thing; youth, health, hope, and confidence, have each a force and vigour they lose in after years. Life is then a splendid river, and we are swimming with the stream—no adverse waves to weary, no billows to buffet with us, as we hold on our way rejoicing."

Morley had buffeted with many adverse waves, but it was the ardour and confidence of this "first burst of life" and spring of youth that enabled him to surmount them; and, inspired by it, he looked hopefully and manfully forward to the vague and uncertain future.

Being an intelligent, well-educated, and well-read man, with a strong sense of probity and trust in religion, Morrison, though several years his senior, formed an admirable companion and occasional mentor to Morley. He was a man who had undergone many vicissitudes in life; but believing rigidly that all things were ordered for our ultimate good, and nothing evil occurred which might not have been worse, he passed through the world with a tolerable air of philosophy, and he contrived somehow to infuse into Morley's more ardent nature the quiet of content for the present time, with a spirit of perseverance and hope for that to come.

So Morrison talked away about Ethel Basset, as if he had known her all his life. He pointed out a variety of ways and means for reaching the Isle

of France. He calculated the distance to a nicety; about 2,400 miles from Rio to the Cape; about 4,800 miles from thence to Tasmania; and about 2,400 more from thence to the Isle of France. In short, making allowance for variation, leeway, head-winds, and so forth, poor Morley found that he must traverse at least 9,600 miles before he saw the land that was Ethel's new home!

At this calculation he could not repress a sigh and an emotion of repining, notwithstanding all the patience and philosophy with which his Scottish friend sought to inspire him.

But the ship flew fast on her watery path. She was spanking along at the rate of nine knots an hour over a smooth sea with a glorious sky overhead —a sky wherein he saw, for the first time, the Hole, or, as sailors term it, "the Coal-sack," a deep and dark blue starless space in the southern quarter of the heavens, an appearance only to be found in those latitudes where, in its far immensity of light-less azure, that portion of the sky becomes black, as if it had been pierced by a hole.

After they had been three days out from Rio, early in the morning, Morley was roused from sleep, first by the rattling and hauling aft of the starboard chain, which the watch on deck were unbending for stowage in the cable-tier, and second by a conversa-tion at the companion hatch, where he heard the

voices of Bartelot and Gawthrop, who both summoned Morrison with something of excitement in their tone, so he, too, hurried on deck.

The wind, which had been due west all night, enabling the *Princess* to run her course with both sheets aft, had veered round to the northward: so she was now trimmed with her starboard tacks on board, and had all her fore-and-aft canvas set.

"What is the matter?" asked Morley.

"Look astern," replied Bartelot.

He did so, and saw a long, low brigantine, with a black hull, and a vast spread of snow-white canvas, heading directly in their wake about ten miles astern.

Every time she rose upon a wave her bright copper flashed in the morning sun, and the foam that flew off from each side from her sharp black prow was white as the cloth of the long tapering jib and flying-jib that bellied out from the bowsprit and boom above.

The crew of the *Princess* were all grouped aft about the quarter, regarding her with some anxiety, conferring in whispers, and the telescope was passed alternately from Bartelot and Morrison to Noah Gawthrop, Ben Plank, the carpenter, and some of the older men of the crew.

"Is there anything suspicious about her?" asked Morley of Gawthrop, who was taking a long and steady look at her through a tarpaulin-covered telescope.

Noah did not reply immediately; but vigorously expectorated his quid to leeward, and again applied his stern grey visual organ to the glass, puckering up the other fearfully as he closed it.

"When I came on deck this morning that craft was hull down at the horizon, bearing northward close-hauled; but she soon altered her course and headed directly after us. As I did not like the cut of her jib, or her hull either, for the matter of that, I kept the ship away six or eight points, upon which she still headed after us, and spread more canvas, which I saw her crew had been wetting. I hoisted our ensign, to which she made no reply by showing any colour, not even a thread of bunting. She is full of men; I don't like her look at all, and don't see why she should be dodging in this way."

This was the explanation of Bartelot, who added:

"And now, Noah, what do you say?"

"I say, sir, as she's a powerfully-built brigantine —coppered to the bends, sharp as a needle, and harmed, too, sir—harmed. She has stings in her, that wasp has! Blowed if I don't see 'em a-tricing up her bow ports now! She's up to some mischief, that confounded miskitty; so as we can't meet her in her own fashion, my advice, captain, is to give her a jolly wide berth."

"Just what I mean to do, Noah. She has gained a knot on us in the last twenty minutes; so, on a

wind, we are no match for her; but before the wind we'll give her the go-by hand over hand."

Bartelot now ordered the vessel's course to be altered due south; the tacks to be brought aft, the fore-and-aft canvas to be reduced, the studding-sails to be set, and each, before it was hoisted out, was well drenched by buckets of water, to make the canvas draw better; and from the tops and cross-trees the courses and topsails underwent a similar process. The royals were set, and little triangular skysails above them, too; thus, in a very few minutes, the *Princess* was flying right before the wind under a mighty spread of canvas.

The morning breeze was fresh and increasing, and as she tore through the glittering water at the rate of ten knots an hour, deeply laden as she was, it literally smoked under her bows, and flew over her dripping catheads, while her new wake was one of white froth, like a mill-race, extending at an acute angle from the old one.

"Hah! look there—how well I knew she was bent on mischief!" exclaimed Bartelot. A white puff, reduced by distance to the size of a whiff of tobacco, escaped from her lee-bow, and a long time after, for she was nine miles or so astern, the report of a cannon came over the water, but still no colours were displayed. "I knew it would come to this; round goes her foretopsail-yard square before the wind."

With man-o'-war-like rapidity she, too, altered her course, set her fore-royal, her fore-top and top-gallant studding-sails, easing off the long spanker-boom and sheet of her enormous fore-and-aft mainsail, above which, on a mast that tapered away aloft like a fishing-rod, she hoisted a tall, shoulder-of-mutton gaff-topsail.

Fast flew the foam before her now, rising at times so high as to hide nearly her black hull, the fulcrum above which this cloud of canvas swayed as she rolled heavily from side to side; but, sharply though she was built, and swiftly as she had hitherto run *upon* the wind, she was no match *before* it for a square-rigged vessel like the *Princess*, with her greater spread of sail.

So now she was left astern as fast as previously she had been overhauling the *Princess*, and as both were now trimmed dead before the wind, each rolled heavily from side to side.

This too-evident pursuit caused considerable excitement, and no small anxiety on board; for, with the exception of a revolver of Tom Bartelot's, and a couple of fowling-pieces, the crew had no arms whatever, save handspikes and their sheath knives, with which to encounter the pirate, if such she proved to be.

That she was not a ship of war was evident, as she did not possess steam power, and carried neither

ensign nor pennant at this juncture; so, whatever her object was, Tom Bartelot, in his present defenceless condition, was resolved to avoid her acquaintance, and continued to run due south during the whole day, for though she was left astern, the brigantine still continued to pursue them, with four long sweeps out, which her crew worked amidships; but, about the middle of the first dog-watch, viz., four o'clock P.M., she was more than hull down at the horizon.

Clouds were banking up to windward; the weather was becoming hazy; but while daylight lasted, Bartelot did not alter his southern course, though he took in some of his studdingsails, and sent down his royals and skysails.

When darkness had fairly set, he reduced the last of his studdingsails, set his fore and mainstaysail, brought the starboard tacks on board, and kept the ship upon her former course, after being forced by this little *rencontre* on the high seas to run about 100 miles out of it, for the ship had gone for more than ten hours at an average of ten knots per hour by the log-line.

He gave Gawthrop the wheel, and ordered him to steer by the stars, when he could see them, as he kept the binnacle dark, lest its lamps, by their light, might reveal the ship's course to some keen-sighted mastheadman of the suspicious brigantine. The

cabin lamp was lit below, but a tarpaulin was spread over the skylight.

Silence was ordered to be kept on deck, as water will convey every sound to a vast distance; so, thus, in the dark, without moon, and with very few stars visible through the gathering scud, to guide our steersman, the ship sped upon her eastern course once more. The chase of the day formed a fruitful theme in the cabin that night, where they frequently congratulated themselves on their escape, and many a strange story of the pirates, whom the progress of steam, and its adoption in war vessels, had swept from those southern waters, served to beguile the night.

Morrison, who had the history and memoirs of all the buccaneers of America and the Indian Isles by heart, particularly excelled in the yarns he spun; but the most quaint was one he told of a Scottish skipper—a Hebridean from Stornaway—who possessed a bottle, the stopper of which informed him how to steer for the avoidance of storms as well as the sailor's horn-book could do.

"A bottle!" exclaimed Bartelot. "I have heard of many a man who has lost his life, and his ship also, by application thereto; but never of one who saved them through its means."

"But this bottle and its stopper were unlike any you ever saw."

"So 'twould seem."

"It was one of our old flat-bottomed, blue Scotch dram-bottles, and had a quaint stopper of delf-ware, in the form of a man's head, with a rubicund visage, a jovial-mouth, wicked-looking little eyes, and a comical red hat. By day, or at any time when the skipper was not present, the queer visage which surmounted the cork remained stolid and immovable, and to all appearance mere delf, like any other stopper where a human face was carved or cast. But at night, when the skipper was seated at his grog, the steward, who peeped in from the steerage the man at the helm, who also peeped down through the skylight; the mate or anyone else who came suddenly below for orders, would find the skipper talking away to the stopper in the bottle neck—the little head was seen to nod waggishly, the eyes to wink and leer, the mouth to laugh, and the little red tongue to speak merrily; and it was further said, that the bottle had the admirable and economical property of being always half full——"

"Like the widow's cruse of oil?"

"Yes; but with the best Campbelton—some said Islay whisky—the quantity of which never diminished, yet it was never replenished by the steward, for the skipper seemed to prize his bottle as if it were the lamp of Aladdin, and always locked it carefully fast in the stern locker."

"And where is this jolly old bottle now?"

"At his death, he bequeathed it to a crack-

brained skipper of Montrose, who, under its influence, astounded the public by the discoveries he made."

"How?"

"He sent the spirit of the bottle, in the form of a woman—a *clairvoyante*—to pry aboard a war ship in the West Indies; to search for Sir John Franklin; to visit his family in heaven, and bring back locks of their hair; to inquire after numerous enemies, who had all gone to the other place—and all of which revelations he duly recorded as they came to pass, in a Scotch newspaper, to the great astonishment of the queen's lieges."

About twelve o'clock, Bartelot went on deck, and adjusted his night-glass to sweep the horizon; but so dark and hazy was the atmosphere, that a large ship might have been within three miles of the *Princess* and yet have been invisible from her deck; so, as the middle watch was Morrison's, he and Morley turned in, and soon were sound asleep.

At 4 P.M. the latter was awakened by the bell being struck, and the morning watch called.

"Is that you, Morrison?" asked Bartelot, from his berth, as a step was heard in the cabin.

"Yes, sir; I was just about to call you in haste."

"About that rascally brigantine?"

"No, sir."

"What is in sight, then?"

"Land on the weather-bow, and we are raising it fast."

"Land!" exclaimed Bartelot, in astonishment.

"Bearing about twenty miles distant."

"Bah! Cape Flyaway. You have been at your Montrose skipper's wonderful dram-bottle."

"Land as solid as the Bass Rock," continued the Scotchman obstinately; "I have just had a squint at it from the fore-crosstrees, and now mean to have a look at the chart."

"This must be some of your second sight—there is no island hereabout, Morrison. Come Morley, turn out—tumble up, there, and let us have a look at Morrison's enchanted island. How's the wind?"

"Veering ahead."

"And how does she lie?"

"East and by north," replied Morrison, glancing at the tell-tale compass that swung in the skylight, and which is constructed so as to hang with its face downward, for use in the cabin. Bartelot dressed in haste, and was soon on deck, where Morley joined him.

Although our hero knew it not—for who can foresee what to-morrow may bring forth?—this enforced and necessary divergence from the vessel's proper course brought about a very strange episode, or adventure, which cast some light upon the origin, and, it might be, the crimes, of certain persons whom we have been, however unwillingly, compelled by the force of circumstances and the tenor of our story, to introduce to the reader.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STRANGE ISLAND.

When they came on deck, day was breaking. The stars were still sparkling brightly in the blue zenith, and in the western quarter of the sky; but they paled away and faded out, as dawn spread over the east, and stole across the ocean in those long streaks of light that are rendered so weird, strange, and indistinct, from having only the tops of the lone waves to rest upon.

There is, indeed, something glorious and impressive in the dawn of a new day, as it spreads over the unlimited space of the mighty deep; and this effect increases in its splendour, as the sun, with tropical rapidity, heaves up at the horizon, amid a burst of golden haze, and then all becomes life and light. There is no eagle there to soar towards him, with the dew on his pinions, and no lark to sing at "heaven's gate;" but the petrels trip along the brine, the huge porpoise soars through the foam rejoicingly, and the silvery flying fish flits like a little spirit from the spray.

The wind was very light; the vessel was creeping along under a cloud of canvas, and as Morley came on deck the watch were busy swabbing it. No need was there to drench it first with water; there had been a rough gale in the morning watch, during which Morrison had ordered the foresail and fore-topsail to be hoisted; since then, the wind had come in angry puffs, and then died gradually away.

Now the ship was almost becalmed, and there, sure enough, upon her weather bow, a few miles off, lay the land which Morrison had so confidently reported, rising in dark and opaque outline, like a dusky patch of indigo, against the yellow and gold of the sky beyond, and the amber sea, that lay in middle distance.

For a time it looked like a dark cloud resting on the sunlit ocean, from which it might arise and melt away, but, gradually, as the ship crept on, the form of a headland, and some tuft-like palm-trees, became defined against the sky.

Higher rose the sun, and ere long the beams began to gild this headland, and to shine glitteringly on the face of a bluff, in which it terminated.

"Land it is—but land here!" said Captain Bartelot.

"An island, and not a very small one either," added Morley.

"It is most extraordinary!"

"How so?"

"Bring up the chart, Morrison," said Bartelot, unheeding his friend's query, "and the log-book, too, with yesterday's reckoning and observation."

Morrison dived below, but speedily re-appeared, with a chart and the ship's log.

"At twelve, sir, yesterday, when we were running away from that rascally piccaroon, we were in latitude 28—25 south; longitude 35—20 west, Tristan d'Acunha bearing sixty-six miles to the eastward."

"That is not Tristan, but an island about three miles long, and there is no indication of it whatever in the chart. It is covered with trees; but I can see no sign of a human habitation," observed Bartelot, as he resumed his telescope.

Light though the wind, the ship gradually crept nearer the island; and by breakfast time is was abeam of her, and about four miles distant.

Save the rock before mentioned, no part of it was very high; it seemed to be about the size stated by Bartelot, and yet, strange to say, it was not recorded or borne in any map or chart on board.

Now there fell a dead and listless calm.

The sun was burning hot and the sea glistened like oil beneath its rays, but the fertility and greenness of this nameless and unknown isle were charming to look upon. Morley regretted the fresh delay occasioned by this calm, especially after the lost

hundred miles yesterday (though a hundred were a trifle after Morrison's galling calculation of the oceans he had yet to traverse), but he could not resist the emotions of curiosity and novelty so peculiar to his age and temperament; and thus he expressed a strong wish to visit this *terra incognita*—this beautiful island of the southern sea.

But Bartelot hesitated.

"It may be the head-quarters, the rendezvous, of those who pursued us yesterday," said he; "and some of their sort, shipmates and companions, may be lurking among those thickets, the foliage of which seems so inviting."

"Save the sea-birds, I cannot discover a living object about it," urged Morley.

"There may be savages—who can say?—and most likely wild animals. There are some very ferocious boars on Tristan d'Acunha, and other South Sea isles. Then we have no arms."

"The revolver and two fowling-pieces——"

"Are not enough, Morley."

"Come, let us be off."

"Lastly, a sudden breeze might spring up, and blow the ship off the island to sea, so far that the boat, and what would be worse, its crew, might be lost. Four sufficient reasons, Morley, for not venturing ashore."

So Bartelot resisted all his friend's importunities,

and the day passed away in idleness, after an observation had been taken at noon, and the exact bearings of the island recorded in the ship's log by Morrison, for the information of the Admiralty, Lloyd's, and others in London.

The calm continued; not a speck could be traced in the unclouded sky, betokening a coming wind, or a casual current of air. The ship lay like a log, with her courses clewed up, her spanker brailed and all the rest of her canvas hanging loose and straight from the yardheads; the wheel, left to itself, oscillated a spoke or two, alternately to port and starboard. There seemed to be little or no current in the water; she had probably not moved in any way more than half her own length for three hours, as Morley perceived by a bunch of seaweed, the top tuft of some mighty trailer (the root of which was, perhaps, forty fathoms deep in the bed of the ocean), which rested on the oily surface of the water, and remained in the same position, with regard to the ship, about five feet from the port quarter-gallery.

In the first dog-watch, about four o'clock P.M., finding matters still thus, and seeing all quiet on the isle, the whole outline of which was reflected downward, as if in a mirror, and with wonderful minuteness, the captain ordered the gig to be lowered. The fowling-pieces and revolver were

carefully loaded, capped, and placed in her, and then he, Morley, old Gawthrop, and three more of the crew shoved off for the shore, or, as they called it, in default of a better name, "Bill Morrison's Island!"

The light gig shot swiftly over the smooth sea, which our friends soon perceived to be full of gigantic trailers and floating leaves; amid these, through the translucent waters, at a vast depth from its surface, the finny tribes, especially the beautiful silver fish, could be seen darting to and fro.

A little sandy creek or bight, bordered by mangrove trees and wild palms, opened before the boat, and offered a secure landing place, though overhung by rocks, that seemed to be literally alive with albatrosses, sea-hens, and other aquatic birds.

In a short space, Morley, Bartelot, and Noah Gawthrop, with the three fire-arms, leaped ashore, and desiring their three shipmates who were in the gig to lie on their oars a few yards off, to prevent any surprise, they started on their tour of discovery.

The island was covered with wood, the foliage of which was singularly luxuriant, and of the most lovely green. Many of the trees and plants were strongly aromatic, and filled the air with delicious perfume. The myrtles, in particular, were of gigantic size, and there were several groves of the

graceful cocoa-palm, under which were gourds, ground apples, and other tropical vegetables, growing in wild luxuriance.

A bird suddenly whirred up from the covert at Morley's feet.

Bang went one of the barrels of his fowling-piece, and the bird fell with flapping wings a few yards off, while hundreds of others, scared apparently by a sound so unusual as the report of a gun, flew hither and thither in confusion and dismay.

"A good shot, Morley," said Bartelot; "but reload instantly, and don't fire again. We don't know whom we may meet in these woods, so it is as well to be prepared."

The bird proved to be a species of black-cock, that is not uncommon in the islands of the South Atlantic.

"Keep a bright look-out a head, sir," said Noah Gawthrop in a low voice; "this island ain't quite so desolate as it looks, arter all."

"How?"

"I'm blessed if here ain't a regular made road, and no mistake, captain."

As Noah spoke, he pointed to a distinct foot track, or narrow beaten way, that passed through the grass. In one direction it led to a spring of deliciously cool and pure water, that fell plashing amid the sylvan silence from the face of a rock,

which was covered with brilliant wild flowers; in the other it led away through a thicket of myrtles, from amid which some wild goats fled, as our explorers cautiously, and with cocked fire-arms, proceeded onward.

Morley was thinking of Ethel, and if with her what an Eden this lonely isle would be; but it was not without emotions of considerable anxiety and curiosity that he and his two companions continued to pursue the narrow track, which ascended in regular zigzag windings to the summit of that high rock, which they had first discerned at sea, and on the face of which the morning sun had shone so brightly.

"It is merely a track made by the goats or wild boars," said Bartelot; "the spring below seems to be the only one in the island, and there, no doubt, they drink."

"Mayhap, sir, the wild boars, and the wild goatses made the road; but 'twasn't them as made this bit o' furnitur—out of a ship's sheathing, too," exclaimed Noah, when, on the very summit of the eminence, that overlooked a vast expanse of sea, they came upon a rude seat, formed, apparently, by the number of holes pierced through it at regular intervals, from a piece of ship's planking, pegged down upon two uprights, which were securely driven into the turf.

The pathway ended here, and the soil about the seat seemed bare and denuded of grass, as if worn away by the feet of frequent sitters.

"What can this mean on such a place?" observed Tom Bartelot, perspiring with heat, and pushing his straw hat on one side of his handsome curly head.

"It means, sir, as there is some reg'lar-built Robinson Crusoe a livin' on this here island, and has made himself this seat to take a good squint to seaward comfortable ov a mornin', to look out for a ship, or, it may be, for the king of the Cannibal Islands, and them cussed ribroasting salwages in their piratical canoos."

This idea of Noah Gawthrop's seemed extremely probable; but after making a circuit of the entire island, they found themselves again on the eminence without discovering other traces of the supposed recluse.

After hallooing repeatedly, scaring all kinds of wild birds from the thickets above, and the gorse or jungle below, they descended towards the spring; but before reaching it found a track that diverged from thence into the very centre of the isle.

Proceeding onward, their curiosity becoming whetted at every step, they perceived a piece of cleared ground, covered with fine grass, on which some goats and little kids, that appeared quite tame, were browsing.

Near this, enclosed by a fence of branches, torn from trees, stuck in the earth, and twisted together, was a small garden, wherein were some turnips, potatoes, radishes, ground apples, and other esculents growing; and sheltered by a grove of giant myrtles, close by, was a little hut, or wigwam, formed of driftwood, fragments of wreck, palm leaves, and turf.

It measured only about twelve feet by ten; it was about nine feet in height, and was covered by masses of beautiful scarlet-runners, and other parasitical plants of the tropics.

The door, a panelled mahogany one, which had evidently been once a portion of a large ship's cabin, was open; so the explorers advanced, and, on entering, beheld a very remarkable, and, indeed, appalling spectacle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HERMIT.

The western sun streamed into the humble hut through the open door, in a broad and yellow flake of light, that seemed to pierce like a solid body the almost palpable obscurity within; and where that flake of sunlight fell full in its glory, there lay, stretched on a bed of moss and dry leaves, an old man, who was too evidently in the last throes of death.

He was clad in a species of long brown weed, which was fashioned like a friar's gown, but had a hood or tippet, formed of grass matting, and both were worn, torn, patched, and mended thriftily.

A cord—a piece of common rope—girt his waist, and thereat hung a little wooden cross, formed, apparently, by himself, of twigs of the myrtle tied cruciform.

His feet were bare, and, like his hands, they were shrivelled and attenuated, till every bone and muscle was painfully visible. His head was bald by age; his features seemed to have been noble and

commanding, and a beard, bushy but dignified, and white as snow, flowed over his breast, and reached to his girdle.

He was dying, whether of age, of illness, want of nourishment, or all these three combined, those who looked on him knew not.

Livid hues were spreading over his face rapidly; his nose, which was fine and aquiline, became pinched and white at the point.

As the visitors stooped over him, his eyes dilated, as if he were still partially sensible to external objects; but it was evident that sight had left him, and that the darkness of death was there.

The hardships incident to a life of seclusion and mortification, such as his must have been on that lonely island, together with his wretched attire and venerable white beard, all served to make him seem a patriarch in years; but Bartelot supposed that he was not much over sixty.

"He is sinking—dying fast," said he, in a whisper, as he took off his hat, while an irresistible emotion of reverence and awe stole over him.

"Outward bound, heaven help him! Goin' forren, and no mistake," said Noah Gawthrop, doffing his straw hat. "I've seen some poor cretturs like this, when I was in the Naval Brigade at Sebastypool. One was always a crossing ov hisself from stem to starn, and from port to star-

board. Another was wot they calls a darvish—he was always a spinning of hisself like a peg-top, and shouting, 'Allar—Allar!' Now, I reckons this here's been a darvish o' some kind."

"Had we come ashore this morning at the time I proposed, we might have saved him, Tom," said Morley, in a low tone, to Bartelot. The latter shook his head, and again the pupils of the glazing eyes dilated, as if the sufferer's ear had caught a passing sound.

"Well," resumed Noah Gawthrop, hissing a kind of sigh through his clenched teeth; "it is a darned hard thing for a poor old fellow like this to slip his cable without knowing what port he may have to steer for."

"He'll be brought up in heaven with a round turn, old boy; at least, I hope so," said Bartelot, as he knelt down and applied to the sufferer's lips a little water from a gourd or calabash that lay near.

Another vessel of the same primitive kind contained some *yerba,* leaves of an evergreen common in Paraguay, and in the isles of the south, which, when diluted with water, yields a species of tea. A smaller calabash contained some goat's milk; such were the equipage and last repast of this poor old recluse.

"See, Captain Bartelot, here is summut wrote on this bit o' plank," said Noah; "it's in some forren lingo, as I takes it."

On the board which formed the head of the truckle-bed, whereon the hermit lay, appeared a cross, carved as if with a knife, and the following inscription or request:

"*Hermano* Pedro Zuares Miguel de Barradas,*
"1863.
"*Rueguen a Dios por el.*"

About five minutes after they entered, a heavy sigh, with a gurgling sound, escaped the hermit, his head turned over a little on one side, the lower jaw fell, quivered, became still, and all was over, and the three strangers remained mute, hat in hand, and gazing with emotions of solemnity and awe on this piteous spectacle.

What was his story? What were the crimes he had committed, the wrongs he had endured at the hands of man, of woman, of the world, that he had been driven to seek a life of such wild and savage seclusion?

Was it the result of eccentric choice, or an inevitable necessity? Who was he, and whence came he? How long had his dreary lot been cast in that voiceless and solitary isle. Had he been the last, or sole survivor, of some ill-fated crew, whose ship had never been heard of since she left her port in old Spain, to be cast away amid the lonely waters of the southern sea?

* Brother.

All these questions must remain unanswered now, and be committed to oblivion with him in his solitary island grave.

That he was a Spaniard was evident from the name, if, as they had no reason to doubt, that name was his which was carved upon the plank that formed a portion of his humble couch, and also from the language of the request, "Pray to God for him," which was written underneath.

Deeply impressed by what they had witnessed, Morley Ashton, Tom Bartelot, and Noah quitted the hut, and under the bright sunshine stepped towards the little garden, where the few herbs the hermit's hand would never cull were ripening in the warm glow.

After a pause, Bartelot said:

"We must give the old man a Christian burial, for we can't shove off to the ship, and leave him lying there like a dead gull."

He looked at his watch, and then at the sun, and added:

"We have two hours yet before sunset; the calm still holds—not a breath of air on land or sea—and the ship is lying yonder like a log. Run to the boat, Noah, shove off to her, and bid the men stretch well on their oars, as we have no time to lose. Bring Ben Plank, the carpenter, ashore, with some boards to make a coffin; bring a shovel, and

my prayer-book, for the English burial service. He wouldn't have believed in it much, perhaps, poor man! but 'twill serve his turn now, as well as another, I hope. Look sharp, old fellow."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Tom, twitching his forelock, and hastening to the creek where the boat lay, with its occupants smoking listlessly in the sunshine, and wondering "what the deuce the skipper was up to in that 'ere island," till Noah enlightened them by a yarn of his own, about the "ould darvish or anchor-right they had found a-drifting from his moorings, and dying all hisself," information that made them lay out on their oars, which flashed brightly as the sharp gig shot over the sunlit sea.

Some time elapsed, however, before she came off again; for, though the ship, influenced by a gentle undercurrent, had drifted nearer the shore, she was still three miles distant.

When the gig's head was turned to the island, the *Princess* had her ensign half hoisted at the gaff peak by Morrison's order, in honour of the funeral ceremony that was to be performed on shore, and the crew were all clustered in the tops and on the cross-trees, with their faces turned in that direction.

The gig soon steered into the wooded creek again, bringing the carpenter, with two large packing boxes, his hammer, saw, and nails; Noah brought a shovel, and while the former proceeded to make

a rude coffin, the latter, with Morley, working by turns with their jackets off, dug a grave for the hermit, in a place chosen by Bartelot, under a magnificent myrtle.

In an hour all the preparations were completed; he was coffined, and lowered by some of the boat tackle into his last resting-place.

With that reverence of which seamen are seldom devoid, Tom Bartelot stood bare-headed at the head of the humble grave, and read the burial services of the Church of England, Morley making the responses.

On one side stood the ship's carpenter, a squat, sturdy sailor; on the other, old, hard-visaged, weather-beaten Noah, hat in hand, his grizzled hair glistening in the sunshine.

At the words—

"Ashes to ashes—dust to dust," Tom, with his straw hat under his left arm, dropped a handful of earth on the coffin-lid; a little rapid shovelling followed; a few sods were batted down, and the funeral party prepared to leave the spot.

Ere doing so, Morley and Bartelot examined the hut very carefully; but found only a few nuts and dried fruits, which formed the larder of the deceased, an old and well-worn knife, like a seaman's, and two or three drinking-cups, formed of cocoa-nut shells, on which were carved crosses and other

religious emblems. These were brought away as relics of their visit.

Just as they were retiring, Noah chanced to cast a glance at the couch of leaves, from which they had so recently removed the body, and near the plank whereon the name and request were written, he found a book, a Spanish missal, as the title-page bore, "*Madrid*, 1840, *Imprenta de Don Pedro Sanz, se hallara en su liberia calle de Carretas*," which he handed to the captain upside down, for any way was all the same to poor Noah's eye.

It contained a piece of folded ribbon, with a cross of red enamelled on gold, shaped like a sword, placed between the masses for the dead; and these relics he and Morley examined as they shoved off for the ship, giving a farewell glance at the lonely grave, at the head of which—as a humble monument to mark that a Christian lay below—Ben Plank had erected two barrel staves, nailed together in the form of a cross.

There was a great deal of manuscript, written small and closely, in Spanish, on the fly-leaves at each end of the missal, with implements that had been apparently pens torn from sea-fowls' wings, and ink furnished by leaves of the wild tobacco, dried in the sunshine, and diluted with water. Thus, from its reddish-brown tint, the writing had all the hue or appearance of that presented by a

MS. of the Middle Ages, rather than of a document which, by its date, seemed to have been written only last year.

"Stretch out, lads, and let us get soon on board. Morrison knows Spanish well, and he'll read all this for us," said Bartelot. "I am curious to know what it is, though, perhaps, it may only be prayers and pious meditations, after all."

The blood-red sun had now set behind the high rock of the Hermit's Isle, and the rude seat, which he never more would occupy, could be distinctly seen, defined in outline against the sky. With tropical rapidity purple dusk was stealing over the red and golden sky. The calm was passing away; the chill night wind, chill alike from sea and land, was now blowing across the long rollers, that urged the swift gig from this unknown shore towards the ship.

They were soon alongside.

"Stand by the fall tackles, watch on deck! Hoist in the boat!" ordered Bartelot, as he sprang up the man-ropes and proceeded aft. "Douse the ensign, Morrison. All is over; we've laid the old man in his last home—and it has been a queer business this. Set the courses; let fall and sheet home, for here comes the breeze; but first look at these things."

"The enamelled sword—a knight's cross of the

Spanish Order of Santiago de Compostello," said Morrison.

"And this writing?"

"On the fly-leaves of the prayer-book or missal?"

"Yes," replied Bartelot, impatiently.

"It begins:—'*The confession of Don Pedro Zuares Miguel de Barradas, Knight Commander of the Order of St. James of Spain, Captain and Governor of the Castle of San Juan de Ulloa, for the Federal Government of the Free States of Mexico.*'"

"Barradas again? It seems to me most strange; but I seem to have heard that name before," said Morley, searching in his memory, as they descended to the cabin, while the yard-heads were filled, and the ship, standing to her course before the freshening breeze, began to leave astern the island where the old hermit lay.

END OF VOL. I.

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